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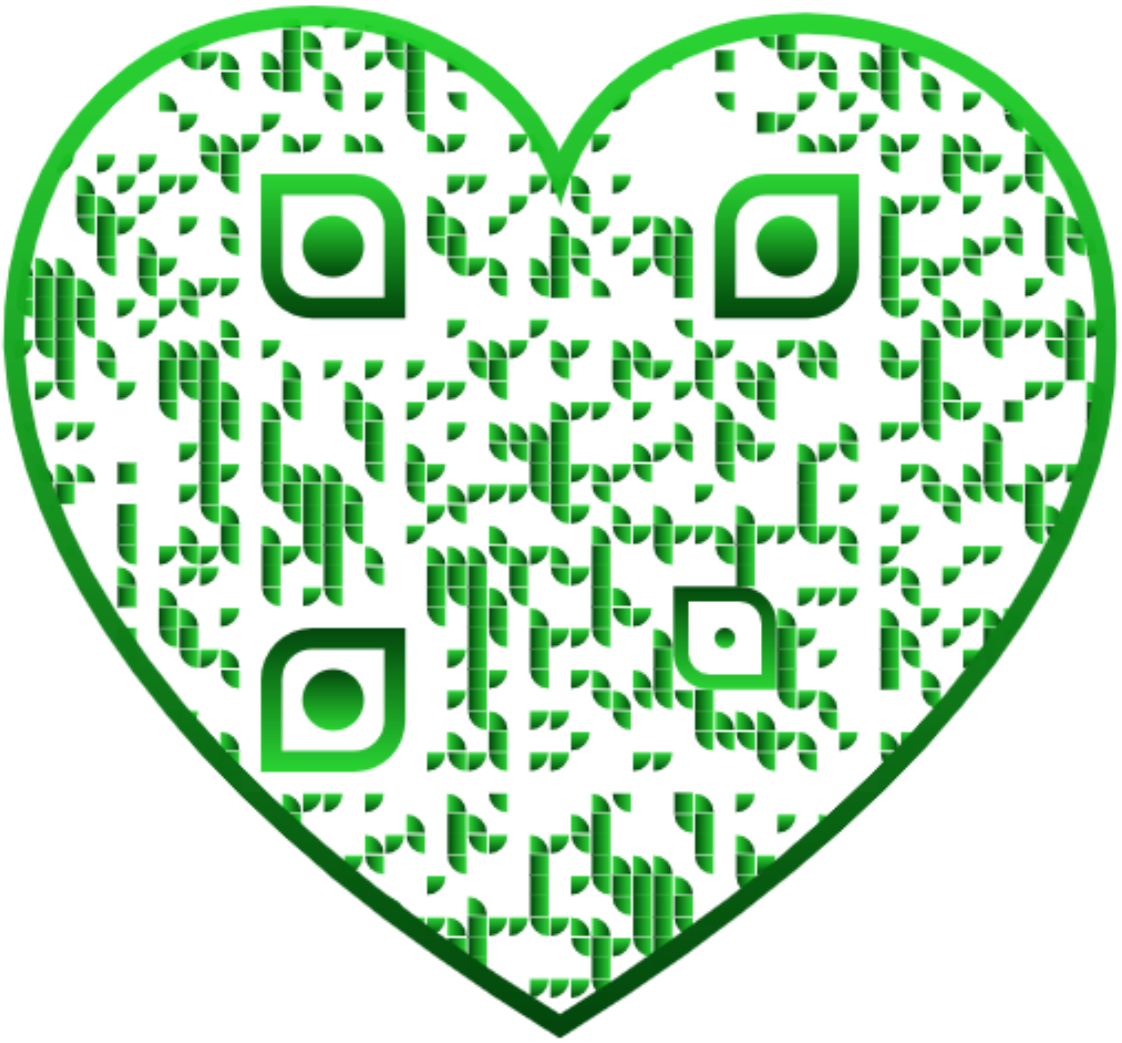

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AMERICAN PINUP
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+ WESS MEETS WEST

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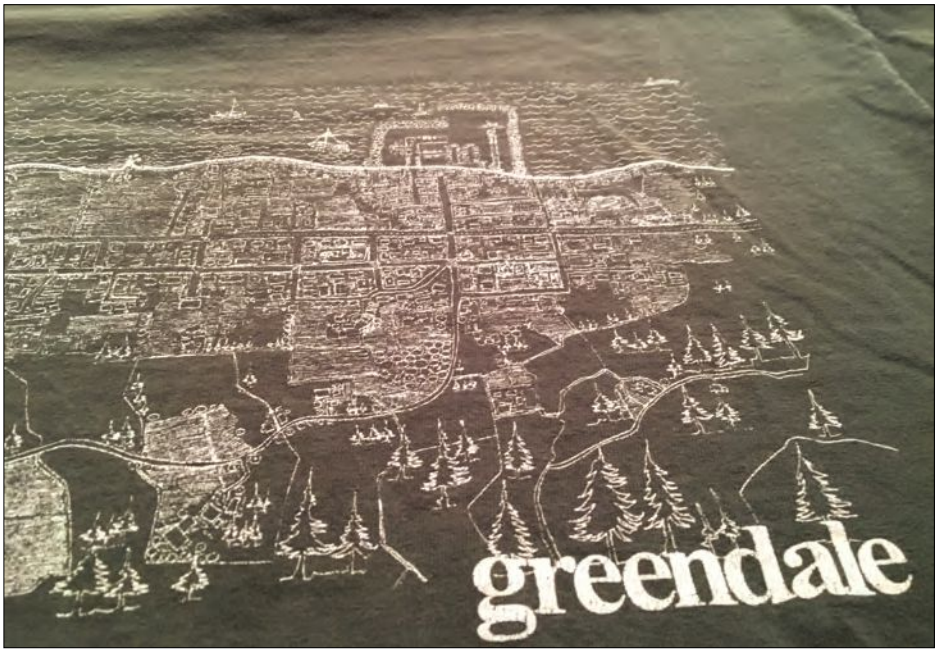
V44 NO1

I'M NOT MUCH OF A concert-merch collector, but I've picked up a few choice items along the way, and a few of those souvenirs happen to be T-shirts. And, for whatever reason, the concert shirt that usually ends up at the top of my drawer is one I bought at a Neil Young show in 2003 while he was promoting his highly theatrical rock-opera *Greendale*. It certainly wasn't my favorite Crazy Horse album and the shirt's not even my favorite design, but it's really comfy and has managed to hold up quite well over the past 13 years. It wasn't until I wore it for the fir t time in front of my now wife, and she asked me what concert it was from, that I realized Neil Young's name only shows up in small letters on a sleeve while the record's tile gets marquee center-chest billing.

It makes perfect sense: Young has famously declared that it's better to burn out than to fade away and, with the exception of the always-enigmatic Bob Dylan, he is the only Desert Trip performer who has continued to morph both his persona and his sound as a septuagenarian. Though certain thematic through lines and social activism commitments remain whether Young is playing solo acoustic, churning through grungy rockers with Crazy Horse, picketing alongside Willie Nelson, embracing his role as jamband godfather as a de facto member of Promise of the Real, or even staging weird musicals that spawn surprisingly cozy short-sleeve shirts, each of his projects have taken on an identity of their own.



It is a thread that ties many of this month's features together. As Cass McCombs eloquently explains in Benjy Eisen's profil , it is all too easy to get so bogged down with an artist's history that you lose focus of the music they are making as they are changing. The Flaming Lips have long since grown from a tight rock-group with a punk ethos to a sonic collective that can barely be described as a traditional band; Foxygen have reinvented themselves with each release to the extent that they, in essence, broke up without enduring a lineup change; Matisyahu has figu ed out how to apply the principles and religious motifs that defined his early work to new styles, players and a more secular look; and Maynard James Keenan has approached building a vineyard as he would starting a band.

This commitment to change has clearly defined oung's work and also kept him relevant during the 50 years since he introduced himself as a member of Buffalo Springfield. In that egard, it almost feels like judging a book by its cover to expect a certain sound, or even set of credits, when you pick up the latest work by a truly classic artist. If Neil Young could write one of my favorite songs of the last year about an Amazon Echo, then who knows, maybe one day I'll be eagerly anticipating Foxygen's latest road-show play—or at least the T-shirt they're selling on the way out.

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International:	(011) + 1-914-962-6292
Fax:	(011) + 1-212-868-4356
Mail:	Relix Magazine, Customer Service, P.O. Box 3111, Langhorne, PA 19047,

Sorry, no subscription cancellations accepted.

RELIX (USPS 401-850) is published bi-monthly—except in March, RELIX (USPS 401-850) is published bi-monthly—except in March, June, September and December, it's published monthly—by Relix Media Group LLC, 104 W. 29th St, 11th Floor, New York, NY, 10001. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offic . POSTMASTER: Send change of address notifications to *Relix* Magazine, Customer Service, P.O. Box 3111, Langhorne, PA 19047.

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Relix accepts all major credit cards, money orders issued in U.S. funds, and personal checks drawn on U.S. bank accounts. Please make payable to Relix Media Group LLC. Current subscriptions rates: USA-$25.00 for one year (8 issues). Canada/International-$39.95 for one year (8 issues).

Select back issues are available for $6.99, plus shipping and handling. See our website for additional information. Please visit www.relix.com.

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ON THE COVER

Jay Blakesberg shot Neil Young in Mountain View, Calif., in October.

BILL GRAHAM AND THE ROCK & ROLL REVOLUTION

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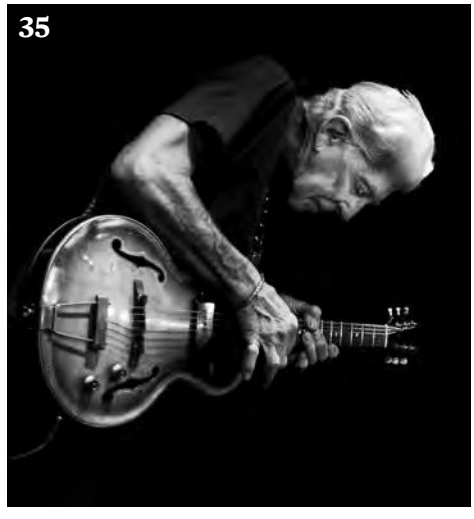
RELIX MAGAZINE (USPS 401-850) is published bi-monthly—except in March, June, September and December, when it's published monthly—by Relix Media Group LLC, 104 W. 29th St., 11th Floor, New York, NY, 10001. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send change of address notifications to Relix Magazine, Customer Service, P.O. Box 567, Selmer, TN 38375-9907.



FEATURES

53 Young & The Restless

Neil Young has long been one of rock-and-roll's most restless spirits. Yet, in recent years, he's surprised even his most ardent supporters, putting aside reunion runs with Buffalo Springfield and azy Horse to tour with Promise of the Real, and relocating from his longtime ranch to be near new girlfriend Daryl Hannah. Editor-in-Chief **Mike Greenhaus** caught up with Young at the end of a politically tumultuous year to talk about his recent burst of creative energy and why he may just be in the midst of his most prolific period et.

50 Phonetically Vivid Phrases

The Flaming Lips battled the darkness on 2013's *The Terror*, working through heavy topics like addiction and divorce. Having successfully exorcised his demons on that record, **Wayne Coyne** and company traded in the personal for the peculiar for their next release, drawing inspiration from a Polish book full of phonetically vivid phrases. **Ryan Reed** recently spoke with Oklahoma's chief psychedelic ambassadors about their latest left turn.

47 *Mangy Love* Songs

Cass McCombs has emerged as one of the most gifted singer-songwriters of his generation, the rare mystic just as likely to jam with Mike Gordon as he is to perform on *Ellen* or create woodsy recordings in his bedroom. **Benjy Eisen** spent time with McCombs around the release of his latest collection of singular stories, *Mangy Love*, and offers a port ait as unique as McCombs himself. As he finds out, ju t because a song is clever and creative doesn't mean that it can't also be catchy.

45 Exhibiting the Bill Graham Revolution

There's no question that **Bill Graham** is a legend, a visionary promoter who helped shepherd the Grateful Dead and create the framework for the modern concert experience. But, as Editor-in-Chief **Dean Budnick** explains through his recent conversation with Graham's sons, that's only part of his inspiring story. And, thanks to a traveling exhibition celebrating his life, a new generation of fans can experience Graham's journey from escaping the Nazis in Germany to playing Father Time for legions of Deadheads on New Year's Eve.

42 The *Spirit* Connection

When **Amos Lee** announced that his latest release, *Spirit*, would be a self-produced affai , many took it as a sign that the songwriter was looking for an opportunity to exert some dominance in the studio. Yet, despite moving behind the boards for the fir t time, Lee actually aimed to create the most collaborative record of his career. Assistant Editor **Matt Inman** walks us through Lee's latest soulful collection, which doubles as a tribute to an old friend.

39 Through the Doors of Perception

Part classic-rock farce, part psychedelic fantasy, **Foxygen** are always entertaining and have also crafted some of the best indie-pop records of the past fi e years. However, at times, their carefully constructed storyline has overshadowed their creative output, and it's often difficult to tell wh e the gags stop and the groundbreaking music begins. Editor-in-Chief **Mike Greenhaus** visited the duo during their recent stop in Brooklyn to discuss their latest stoner classic, *Hang*.

Danny Clinch (June). Cristina Arrigoni (Mayall)

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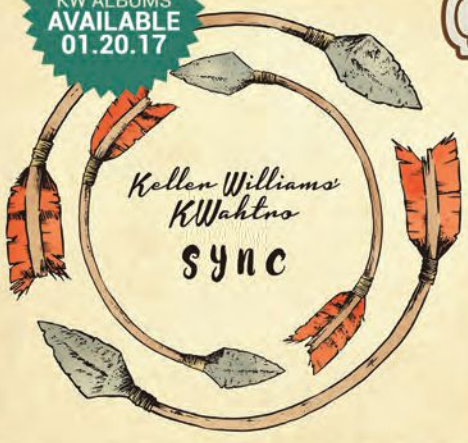

First studio album from Keller Williams' KWahtro

On January 20th, 2017, Keller will release two albums simultaneously, two albums that couldn't be more different! SYNC and RAW. In honor of the release of SYNC and RAW, Keller has joined forces with Summer Camp Music Festival to bring you the "Go to Summer Camp with Keller Pre-Order Contest."

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The prize includes an all expenses paid trip to Summer Camp Music Festival (flights for two & rental car reimbursement), as well as two VIP Weekend Camping Passes to the festival, backstage access during Keller's set, and two pairs of Keen shoes! To be entered to win, purchase SYNC or RAW (CD, Digital Download, or Vinyl) through www.kellerwilliams.net before 1/20/2017 and receive TWO entries into the contest. Purchase SYNC or RAW between 1/20/2017 and 3/5/2017 and receive ONE entry to the contest.
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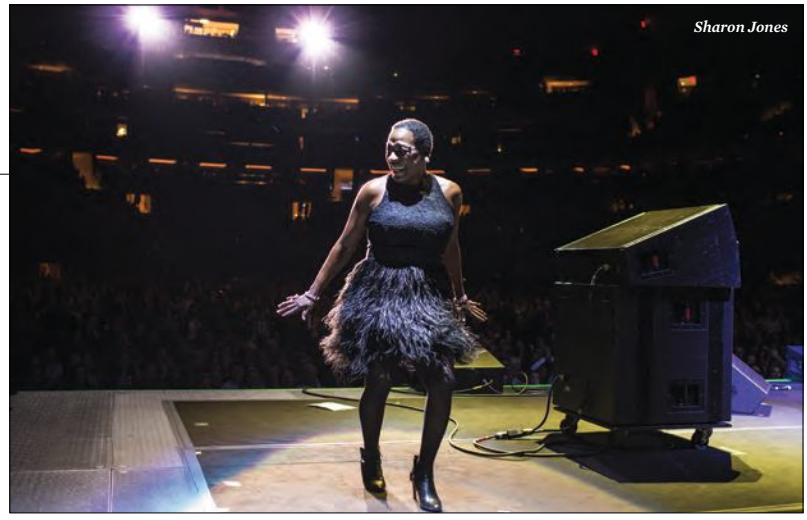
KEEN

Dear Relix

Here's what readers are talking about online and offli


Sharon Jones

DEAR RELIX

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SAYING GOODBYE TO MISS SHARON JONES

On November 18, Sharon Jones, The Dap-Kings frontwoman who helped shepherd a 21st-century soul revival, passed away after a heroic battle with pancreatic cancer. She was 60 years old. Jones continued performing despite her diagnosis and was surrounded by loved ones—including her bandmates—at the time of her death. While on tour with Hall & Oates this summer, Jones spoke to Relix *Editor-in-Chief Mike Greenhaus about her life's journey, tracing her story from her humble beginnings to the fame she eventually found in her 40s* ("Give the People What They Want," *September_October 2016).*

"I just thank God," Jones said. "I know that he had given me a gift so that one day [people] would choose me for my voice, not the way I look." Throughout the conversation, which is now posted in full on Jambands.com, Jones touched on numerous career milestones, including her collaboration with Phish at their Festival 8 in 2009. "I didn't know the band," Jones admitted. "I picked up so many fans being at that Phish concert, being on that video. People still say to me, 'Oh, man, I never knew who you were until I saw you with Phish, and I've been a fan of yours ever since.'"

Jones also noted that she hoped to work on another album after wrapping up her summer touring commitments. She was in the process of promoting her film, Miss Sharon Jones!, *adding that seeing the footage "is getting me through this battle again," referring to her latest round of chemotherapy. "Seeing that movie, I said, 'Oh, Sharon, get on up, get back out there. You're still not in pain if you got that energy. Get onstage and do the best you can.'"*

After Jones' passing, a number of readers reflected on her life and legac .

Absolutely crushed—Sharon Jones was one of those rare people everyone should have or did see and all loved or would have. She was this generation's Tina Turner and just an absolute ball of fi e that rocked. Last time I saw her was about 15 months ago on the "Wheels of Soul" tour and she was still wild. If I can live my life to the end even half as much as she did, then I'll be satisfied. R.I. ., Sharon...

Me via Jambands.com

She was a phenomenal performer in every sense. Like a female James Brown, she totally electrified the oom. Very soulful, intimate shows with an excellent old-school band. Absolutely tragic. R.I.P., Miss Sharon.

Timmy via Jambands.com

I got to see her several times, including a very special evening with Phish, where she supplied backing vocals on an amazing cover of the *Exile on Main St.* album by The Rolling Stones. After that, she took ownership of the best version of Phish's song "Suzy Greenberg" that I have ever heard. R.I.P., Sharon Jones.

Gorm Brunso via Facebook

ROLLING AWAY THE STONE

Leon Russell died on November 13 near Nashville, Tenn., at age 74, while recovering from heart surgery. Russell was best known for his work with Joe Cocker on the "Mad Dogs & Englishmen" tour, but he also had credits with The Beach Boys, Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr, George Harrison, Elton John and many others.

My mother had all his records. Grew up with Leon. Grew into his music as I got older. One-of-a-kind artist.

Michael via Relix.com

I grew up listening to my older brother's copy of *Leon Live*, for hours on end, in the late '70s. After 40-plus years of near nonstop music, it's still at the top of my favorite albums list.

T Floyd via Relix.com

Stranger in a strange land no more, onward with prince of peace. May the hummingbird whistle your tunes—beautiful songs from this underappreciated artist.

John T Huffman via ambands.com

RECORD STORE PROFILE: GOOD RECORDS, DALLAS

With the motto "Everyday Is Record Store Day," Good Records sits just a few miles from the heart of downtown Dallas and features eclectic selections, great bargains (hence the Record Store Day reference) and in-store performances that have recently included Mike Doughty, Bad Suns and more.

FANS.COM PHOTO CONTEST

Keller Williams prepares to take the stage before his Thanksforgrassgiving show at Washington, D.C.'s 9:30 Club, Nov. 25, 2016.

Photo by Will Dave Lawrence.

Want to be published in Relix? Just upload an original photo from a live music event to Relix.com's Fans.com Photo Contest app. Noted photographer Jay Blakesberg will select the winner from the group of 10 finalists who receive the most votes.

INSTAPRINT

As they say, the band that eats together stays together. Rachael Price and her Lake Street Dive bandmates (@rachaelpricepants) stopped in for a mid-tour meal—probably late-night—at the iconic Waffle House for some hash browns scattered, smothered and covered.

Jacob Blickenstaff (Sharon Jones)

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The Beat

THE BEST FROM FESTS & TOURS TODAY

Gracious host Warren Haynes appeared with Weir & Co.

WARREN HAYNES PRESENTS: THE 28TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS JAM

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DECEMBER 10
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID SULLENGER

For the 28th consecutive year, Ashville, N.C., native **Warren Haynes** assembled a collection of like-minded musicians for his charitable **Christmas Jam** benefit.

While Haynes typically opens the event, this year, he ceded that duty to **Holly Bowling**, who delivered solo piano arrangements of Grateful Dead and Phish tunes including "Cryptical Envelopment," "Taste" and "The Inlaw Josie Wales" during one of her brief sets. Bowling reappeared throughout the night during stage changeovers, including one sequence that moved from "A Song I Heard the Ocean Sing" into "Crazy Fingers," "The Other One" and back into "A Song I Heard the Ocean Sing."

Haynes then welcomed the crowd with a brief solo performance, offering "The Real Thing" and "And It Stoned Me" before **Jamey Johnson** and **Alison Krauss** stepped out for an 11-song set, which commenced with "High Cost of Living" and included "When You Say Nothing at All" and "In Color," with Johnson's father **Howard** sitting in.

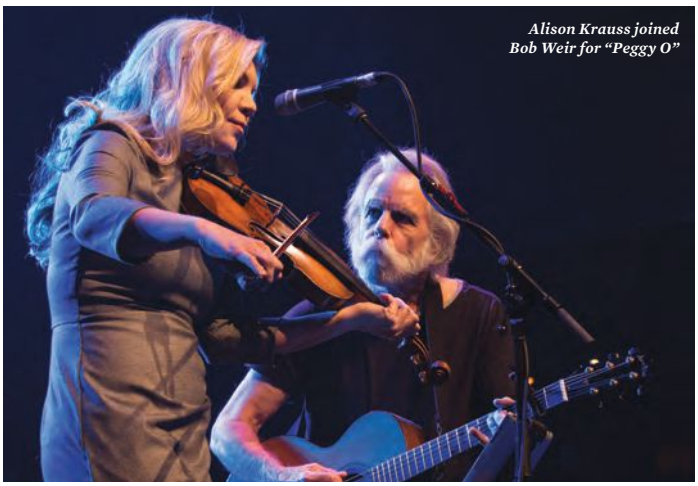
A funk superjam featuring **George Porter Jr.**, **Eric Krasno**, **Terence Higgins**, **Branford Marsalis** and **John Medeski** followed; the musicians teamed up on "I Need More Time" and "Just Kissed My Baby," before **Marcus King** emerged for "He Bite Me (The Dragon)" and **Bob Weir** joined in for "Sugaree" and "Iko Iko." Marsalis, Medeski and Higgins also appeared with Christmas Jam staple **Audley Freed** and **Don Was** as **Michael McDonald**'s "friends" for a few selections that included The Doobie Brothers' "What a Fool Believes" and "Takin' It to the Streets."

Weir's performance opened with a solo take on "Easy to Slip," after which he welcomed Krauss for "Peggy O." Then, along with **Steve Kimock**, **Duane Trucks** and **Don Was**, he performed *Blue Mountain* tunes "Ghost Towns" and "Only a River" before Haynes, Bowling and Marsalis appeared for "He's Gone," "Eyes of the World," "Truckin'" and "Ripple."

Next came a special preview of the forthcoming "Last Waltz 40" tour that found Haynes, Was, McDonald, Johnson, Medeski, Higgins, **Mark Mullins** and the **Levee Horns** running through Band classics such as "Up on Cripple Creek," "The Shape I'm In" and "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." Soon after, Weir and Krauss sat in for "The Weight," Krauss rejoined for "Helpless" and **Bob Margolin** and **Smoky Greenwell** guested on "Mannish Boy" and "Further on Up the Road."

Gov't Mule closed the proceedings without drummer Matt Abts, who was called away on a family health

A preview of the "Last Waltz 40" tour



Alison Krauss joined Bob Weir for "Peggy O"

Holly Bowling shared the sweet sounds of Phish and the Dead throughout the night

matter. **Rocky Lindsley** served in his stead during "Mule" and "32/30 Blues," with the latter tune also featuring **Mike Barnes**, King and Greenwell. **Jeff Sipe** then joined the fold during "Sco-Mule" along with Marsalis, who remained for the Allman Brothers Band staples "Dreams" and "Mountain Jam." Kimock and a drumming tandem boasting Widespread Panic's Trucks and **Paul Riddle**, of the classic Marshall Tucker Band lineup, also guested on those final tune , bringing the evening to a climactic musical close. The reverberations will follow for years to come, through the efforts of the event's longtime beneficiar , Habitat for Humanity.

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Soundcheck

LIVE REVIEWS AND NEWS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE *Compiled by* DEAN BUDNICK

Both concert and performance art: Bon Iver in Brooklyn

BON IVER

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BROOKLYN, N.Y.
DECEMBER 12

In the midst of an impressive 10-night run, spanning five venues around the New York City area, **Justin Vernon** opened up the first of two evenings at Brooklyn's gorgeous Kings Theatre the same way he opened up his gorgeous third **Bon Iver** album, *22, A Million*—with the airy "22 (OVER S∞∞N)."

As several spotlights converged on him, Vernon delivered his signature falsetto from behind his center-stage console, controlling and looping the vocal samples that characterized much of the new album while intertwining his own voice in a way that felt both well practiced and refreshingly loose.

Vernon was flanked by four multi-instrumentalists—including two drummers—and, at times, five saxophonists. With all there was to look at onstage and the powerful music that was emanating from it, the visuals of Bon Iver's live show—which featured several strategically placed lights that were coupled with a background of tall screens that flashed Eric Timothy Carlson's *22, A Million* art—took time to settle in, slowly and decidedly enhancing the overall experience.

Album standout "33 'GOD'" followed on the heels of the opening song, starting with a meditative sample and more falsetto before building to one of the most satisfyingly percussive choruses that Vernon has written, bolstered in the live setting by the double-drum attack. Vernon, who has evolved from acoustic-strumming singer-songwriter to electronic-leaning conductor over three albums, only picked up an instrument starting with the third song of the night, "666," adding light electric guitar to the amorphous verses.

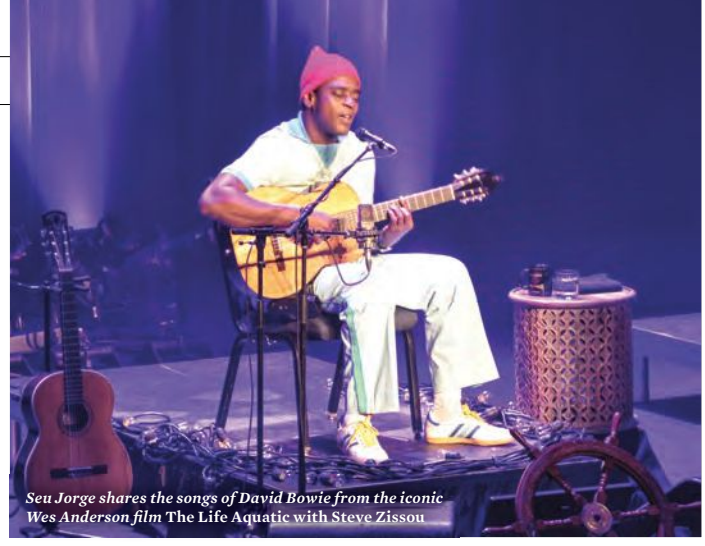
"Towers," the first song of the set that wasn't from the new album, was also the first to feature the full saxophone section, dipping into the lush Americana production that ran throughout Bon Iver's self-titled sophomore record. The band then returned to *22, A Million* for a run of three songs, the achingly beautiful "29 #Strafford APTS" and the duo of "21 M◊◊N WATER" and "8 (circle)," which segued from the former's experimental ethos to the latter's reflective, Bruce Hornsby-esque lilt.

At some points in the night, it was difficult to decipher which sounds were coming from live instruments and which were from pre-recorded snippets—to great effect in the overall performance. Bon Iver live almost crosses over from music concert to performance art, a testament to what Vernon has built and the fact that the time he took off fter his second Bon Iver album was well worth it.

Continuing with the new songs, the hip-hop influenced "10 d E A T h b R E a s T " showed that Vernon learned some solid things during his time spent with Kanye West, while its album counterpart, "715 - CR∑∑KS," found Vernon using the multi-layered vocals produced by his talk box for a passionate and intimate take on the tune. Vernon then returned to Bon Iver's sophomore album for another Hornsby homage, the keyboard-imbued "Beth/Rest."

Near the end of the show, Vernon spoke to the crowd directly, touting his gender-equality 2 A Billion campaign and conveying his disdain for "bullshit" encores before launching into the coda for the night, which consisted, fi tingly, of the final two songs from *22, A Million*. First came "___45___," which was distilled into a duet between Vernon's voice and **Mike Lewis**' effects-boosted saxophone, and "00000 Million," which brought the emotionally soaring show to a gentle, utterly satisfying landing—sans encore, of course. ***Matt Inman***

Allyson Lupovich



Seu Jorge shares the songs of David Bowie from the iconic Wes Anderson film The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou

SEU JORGE'S A LIFE AQUATIC: A TRIBUTE TO DAVID BOWIE

CIVIC THEATRE
NEW ORLEANS
DECEMBER 6

Despite a continuously growing cultural cachet over the past dozen years, Brazilian singer-songwriter and actor **Seu Jorge** had never performed the David Bowie songs from *A Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou* before a live audience until this fall. Even during an 11-month stretch, when Bowie tributes have poured in from around the globe, it feels like the perfect time for Jorge to don the red stocking cap (from the film) and bring his character Pelé dos Santos to venues around the country.

Backing up 11 months, Seu Jorge's year got o° to a tragic start. His father passed away in mid-January just three days after the death of David Bowie, an artist with whom his name and career will forever be inextricably linked. Jorge would humbly speak to the impact that both men had on his life and dedicate "Life on Mars" to his father and Bowie. Although they never met, Bowie did remark in the *Life Aquatic Sessions* liner notes: "Had Seu Jorge not recorded my songs in Portuguese, I would never have heard this new level of beauty which he has imbued them with." Many in the audience in New Orleans surely felt the same way after seeing these songs arranged and beautifully crooned in such a fashion that alters and reinvigorates the source material, a rming that we have been left with a timeless trove.

The 90-minute set transcended language barriers and allowed for some riveting moments of palpable interconnectivity between the lone artist on stage and the crowd filling every inch of the Civic Theatre. As Jorge sang the lyrics to songs such as "Starman" in Portuguese, fans sang along in English and, although the words intoned by Jorge"and the crowd were di° erent, a rich harmony bound the two concentric waves of sound in a captivating and indescribable way. (However, a number of fans *did* sing in Portuguese.)

Jorge's banter was every bit as engaging to the audience as the music itself—he waxed poetic about his relationships, his small family and his unlikely ascent to global fame between readings of "Five Years," "Rock and Roll Suicide," "Su° ragette City" and a couple of di° erent bossa nova takes on "Rebel Rebel" (one early in the show and one in the encore).

"Soulful, captivating and exceptionally inviting, Jorge broke the barrier between artist and audience, turning the Civic Theatre into more of a campfire setting than your standard, everyday indoor concert."***Wesley Hodges***

14TH ANNUAL BRENDAN BAYLISS & JAKE CINNINGER HOLIDAY SHOW

PARK WEST
CHICAGO
DECEMBER 10

As Chicago's first significant snowfall of the season slowly started to cover the city in soft, white flakes, Umphrey's McGee fans, adorned in their holiday best, took refuge among old friends at the 14th Annual **Brendan Bayliss** and **Jake Cinninger** Holiday Show, which served as a benefit for the Jerry Cummins "I Love Math" scholarship fund and the Illinois Alzheimer's Association.

Umphrey's keyboardist **Joel Cummins** kicked o° the show at a grand piano surrounded by a Christmas tree, a menorah and a lot of lights. "I've been told Umphrey's fans like rarities," Cummins said, before jumping into "Salamander Strut"—a tune the band hadn't played in 2,083 shows—and a Miles Davis "Blue in Green" cover that quieted the verbose crowd. "I've also been told that Umphrey's McGee fans like fast music, so I thought I should find songs with lots of notes," he joked before a medley of Claude Debussy compositions, including "First Arabesque"—a tune he's played the last few years but recently perfected through classes with the mother of an UM friend. After a mash-up of Radiohead's "Everything in Its Right Place" and Phil Collins/Philip Bailey's "Easy Lover," Cummins attempted the Allman Brothers Band classic "Jessica," a song he admitted he'd only played one other time. His set came to a close with Umphrey's "Orféo" and a Holiday Show tradition: Vince Guaraldi Trio's "Linus And Lucy" with Cinninger on drums.

Cinninger and Bayliss then took the stage, sitting so close together on a small, plush couch that Cinninger's long, bouncing limbs seemed to just miss Bayliss' as they played Umphrey's McGee favorites "In the Kitchen and "Cut the Cable." The first of many covers was Led Zeppelin's "Going to California," which a mandolin-playing, red wine-drinking Bayliss dedicated to a friend in the crowd who was moving to Denver. **Andy Farag** joined the acoustic duo on drums and Cummins joined on the grand piano for "No Diablo" and "Water," before they added **Mike Racky** on the lap-steel guitar for "Booth Love."

A holiday tradition continues in Chicago

The group proceeded to o° er a covers marathon, ranging from Ween's "Transdermal Celebration" and Bob Marley's "Kinky Reggae" to The Temptations' "Ain't Too Proud to Beg." As a result of a Cubs World Series wager made with Los Lobos, the quintet covered "The Valley," followed by a welcome cover of Springsteen's "I'm on Fire." Bayliss took his wine to the piano for a sweet "Christmas Time Is Here" solo before being joined by Racky and Cinninger for Bob Dylan's "Mama, You've Been on My Mind" and Sublime's "Santeria."

Cummins and Farag then returned to the stage for a closing cover of John Lennon's "Watching the Wheels," before show emcee and longtime friend of the band **Barry Brown** took a seat behind the piano to lead the crowd in a Styx "Come Sail Away" sing-along. "This is going to be a new Christmas staple," Bayliss said when the group returned to the stage for a holiday-themed version of The Doors' "L.A. Woman" that found the crowd singing "Mr. Snow-man Ris-ing." The show concluded with "Bittersweet Haji," the mash-up from UM's new *Zonkey* release, and an appropriate finale, "Home Sweet Home" by Mötley Crüe. ***Heather Farr***

Wesley Hodges (Jorge), Tara Gracer (Bayliss and Cinninger)

READ THE BOOK

The third edition of **The Phish Companion: A Guide to the Band & Their Music** is more than an essential reference guide. It's a hard-bound, 898-page, full-color feast for the senses.

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THE COMPLETE LAST WALTZ

CAPITOL THEATRE
PORT CHESTER, N.Y.
NOVEMBER 23

Thanksgiving may not be the most musical holiday—that honor undoubtedly goes to Christmas—but Turkey Day does boast one perennial classic for many music lovers, *The Last Waltz*. The Band's final concert, which took place on Thanksgiving Day in 1976, celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. And while guitarist Robbie Robertson marked the occasion with a massive reissue of the original recordings, a slightly more on-point celebration took place on Thanksgiving Eve, just a short train ride north of New York City. There, at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, more than 30 musicians gathered together with a few thousand fans for four hours of music dubbed "The Complete Last Waltz"

Now in its fourth year—it began in 2012, but took last year o° — the show has grown into one of the best tributes to The Band's immortal showcase around. Perhaps it's because the group—led by Brooklyn musician **Sam Cohen** and featuring members of Furthur, Joe Russo's Almost Dead and Tedeschi Trucks Band, among others, along with a rotating crop of special guests—opts to plow through the entirety of the original's 40-song setlist, an undertaking that few, if any, other events can boast. A better explanation, though, might be that "The Complete Last Waltz" doesn't just reconstruct the music of *The Last Waltz*, but also the spirit as well. The beauty of the original show wasn't in its celebration of The Band, but its celebration of all music, and this show allowed the audience to experience what that night might have felt like.

Each guest singer brought something powerful to the stage, whether it was the artists who keep coming back year after year, like Wilco's **Nels Cline**—who delivered ferocious performances of "All Our Past Times" and "Further on Up the Road," complete with dazzling guitar wizardry—or newcomers like soul singer **Curtis Harding**, who took on "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" and brought the house down in the process.

It was a night of one highlight after another, but standouts included Dap-Kings guitarist **Binky Griptite** providing Muddy Waters' "Mannish Boy" with a racially charged bite, Fruit Bats' **Eric D. Johnson** doing a spot-on Van Morrison in a stellar rendition of "Caravan" and **Nicole Atkins** leading the crowd through an emotional sing-along of Neil Young's "Helpless" with Arc Iris' **Jocie Adams** playing the role of Joni Mitchell.

As the clock rounded midnight, the evening came to a close with **Matthew Houck**, better known as Phosphorescent, taking on the role of Bob Dylan, complete with polka-dot shirt and white fedora, and lending his voice to the suite of "Baby Let Me Follow You Down," "Hazel," "I Don't Believe You (She Acts Like We Never Have Met)" and a rousing "Forever Young." The entire ensemble returned to the stage for an arm-in-arm "I Shall Be Released" and a final encore of Marvin Gaye's "Don't Do It," led by the phenomenal **Alecia Chakour**.

The show ultimately felt like a sendo° to 2016, a bright moment in a year that has often felt dark. It served not only as a way to escape, but also as a reminder of the power that music can have, and it seemed like there wasn't a person in the house that left without a smile on their face and passion in their hearts. ***Carter Shelter***

Nicole Atkins joins The Last Waltz

JIM JAMES

THE WILMA THEATRE
MISSOULA, MONT.
DECEMBER 5

Jim James has developed a status of iconic pop reverence over the last two decades, from his initial rise to stardom fronting My Morning Jacket to high-profile collaborations in supergroups like Monsters of Folk and The New Basement Tapes. His multifaceted persona and boundless creativity

Andrew Blackstein

Jim James: "A New Life" in Montana

have taken another turn on recent solo albums, which are packed with space-age slow jams that mold the more groove-oriented side of MMJ into something denser, sexier and even more hypnotic. During his stop at the historic Wilma Theatre, James delivered a mesmerizing mixture of songs off is first record and his new release, *Eternally Even*.

Beginning with the syrupy delivery of "Hide in Plain Sight," James led his band through expansively pulsating arrangements and slow burners designed to hypnotize the listener as much as make them dance. The throbbing, subterranean rhythm section was cross-pollinated with murky synth textures and angular guitar riffs, which James' otherworldly voice soared across. The most powerful moments often came when the oozing, psychedelic soulfulness gave way to other moods, such as the energetic doo-wop groove of "A New Life" or James' Crazy Horse-worthy slabs of overdriven guitar notes during "Dear One."

James possesses an idiosyncratic charisma that is almost disarming in its subtlety. He languidly paced the stage as he sang, touching index fingers with audience members, his eyes hidden behind dark shades. Some of the pointed social commentary woven through *Eternally Even* came to light onstage—during "True Nation," an audience member who recently returned from the Standing Rock protests offered James a cloth flag proclaiming "Water Is Life," and the singer held it for the crowd to see. "This is beautiful," he said about the flag, repeating the mantra "Peace and Love" before launching into the psych-funk of "We Ain't Getting Any Younger Pt. 2."

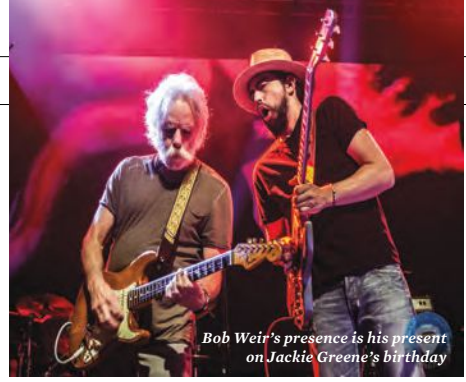
"Eternally Even" rounded out the set and James departed before his band followed suit, one by one, gradually dismantling the song structure. James then reemerged alone with an acoustic guitar for the encore, delivering a cover of Roy Acuff's country classic "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain" and segueing seamlessly into The Drifters' "Save the Last Dance for Me." The rest of the group rejoined their leader for three more songs, culminating in a bombastic version of "State of the Art (A.E.I.O.U.)" that built to full-bore MMJ rock fervor before the lights went up.

Jed Nussbaum

Neubauer Media

JACKIE GREENE BAND

THE WARFIELD
SAN FRANCISCO
NOVEMBER 26



Bob Weir's presence is his present on Jackie Greene's birthday

The **Jackie Greene Band** have been playing shows in and around San Francisco for a loyal legion of fans for years, but had never before headlined the marquee Warfield, as they did on November 26 to celebrate Greene's 36th birthday.

A crisp, but thunderous "Back to the Bottom" set the tone for the evening, as the group came out with edge and purpose and solidly ran through recent tour staples, including the reflecti e blues ballad, "Silver Lining." From there, guests began joining the band on stage, beginning with guitarist **Mark Karan** for covers of Traffi s "Medicated Goo" and Little Milton's "That's What Love Will Make You Do," followed by drummer **Bruce Spencer** for the Allman Brothers' "Hot 'Lanta" and Greene's own "Till the Light Comes" to close out the 90-minute set.

After a 15-minute break, the band returned with **Bob Weir** in tow for "Gonesville" and "Lay My Lily Down" from Weir's recently released solo effort, *Blue Mountain*. Greene donned a mandolin and added backing vocals while **Fitz Harris** added some nice touches on the skins. Greene then exchanged the mandolin for acoustic guitar and countered with the longtime fan-favorite "Gone Wanderin'" and the more recent "Light Up Your Window," before Weir led the group through the Grateful Dead's "Ripple" to close the frame.

Weir then returned along with Jackie's brother **Alex Nelson** on piano for a massive concluding set that began with a rambunctious "Jack Straw." Following a pleasing take on The Temptations' "Standing on Shaky Ground," **Phil Lesh** arrived with embraces for Greene and Weir, making this only the third time the Dead bandmates have performed together since Fare Thee Well.

While the bassist tuned up, **Nicki Bluhm** emerged from the stage-right darkness to share a microphone with guitarist **Nathan Dale**, lending her vocal talents to "Scarlet Begonias" and "Fire on the Mountain." The collaboration continued to pick up steam during "Dark Star," which featured Greene's uptempo "I'm So Gone" tucked inside, while Karan returned during the second portion of the song. A rocking "Shakedown Street" included an instrumental interpolation of Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall (Part 2)" inserted as a tasty intermezzo. By the time **Ross James** joined the stage during the second half of "Shakedown," the night had clearly become as much of a party for those on stage as for those in the throng grooving before them. The set wrapped up with "China Cat Sunfl wer," which transitioned to a crescendo with "I Know You Rider."

After a quick fi e minutes off tage, the full ensemble emerged to sing "Happy Birthday" along with the crowd as Nicki Bluhm presented Greene with a cake. The evening concluded with a rollicking, nearly 15-minute "Sugaree" as Bluhm, Karan and Weir contributed verses before Greene concluded the three-and-a-half-hour celebration for the delighted and exhausted attendees. ***Michael Smyth***

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MATISYAHU

The formerly Hasidic reggae superstar returns to the studio with his live band for a set of fresh, spontaneous jams. BY MATT INMAN

Rachel Baron

MATISYAHU might not look quite like the beatboxing Jewish reggae star you remember. Just over a decade after exploding onto the scene with his breakout albums *Live at Stubb's* and *Youth*—and fi e years after splitting from the Hasidic movement closely associated with his public image—Matis sits smiling in the corner of Brooklyn's Studio G on a chilly November day, sans beard, with pulled-back gray semi-dreadlocks. He's currently overseeing the members of his band as they continue to craft the tracks for his new album, the improvisation-heavy follow-up to 2014's *Akeda*.

One month later, Matis is in the *Relix* office for quick session that turns into a family affair as t o of his sons help out on harmonies that allow their father—accompanied by longtime collaborator and guitarist Aaron Dugan—to showcase both his lyrical abilities and well-honed beatboxing techniques. The reggae veteran is characteristically affabl , beaming while discussing the new album, which features his live band of Dugan, bassist Stu Brooks, drummer Joe Tomino and keyboardist "Big Yuki" Hirano.

"Two years ago, I decided to put together a band that was more geared towards improvisation," says Matisyahu, who brought Dugan back after a hiatus from his group. He also decided to utilize Brooks and Tomino of the Dub Trio, the unit that backed Matis on the road for several years. "Everyone comes from diffe ent places, but Joe and Stu come from a similar place—that New York hip-hop dub thing, which is pretty cool. They speak the same language."

It took the band, which had been set for about a year, some time to learn that same language as Matis and Dugan led them into more exploratory areas, musically. Matis isn't a stranger to collaboration—he even cut a studio track with Twiddle frontman and fellow reggae-head Mihali Savoulidis in 2015—but this time around, he was looking to go even deeper with this lineup, reaching out to his fans and attempting to make a genuine connection.

Improvisational Landscapes

When we went into writing, one of the main struggles for the band was not locking into ideas too soon. We went into the studio to write songs and develop parts and figu e out the details of these songs, but I had to keep reminding everybody: "Don't play what you played last time. Play something diffe ent—open up, open up." That's been the name of the game. With some players, like Aaron, it comes very naturally, and then with other players—who are incredibly talented and help give this band the edge that

separates it from a lot of the other jambands out there—we tried to get them to open up a bit more. It happened on the record and it was exciting because I have these eight songs that are like eight minutes each that are these journeys into diffe ent lands and diffe ent cavernous soundscapes. I tried to be the narrator on a journey because to release this music as an instrumental album without any vocals would be cool. I'm just figuring out whe e I can dip in and help shift and move things, and develop and build on what there is.

All of us in the band listen to diffe ent genres of music, and I worked hard to put together a band that's able to go in all these directions. We listen to all that music together, so we are listening to each other and figuring out what get each other excited and what's capable and possible—that can bring things in surprising directions. When we look at ourselves, we see the Matisyahu thing as a place to explore and bring diffe ent things together—in essence, what I was doing from the beginning with Judaism and reggae and other things as well.

Tension and Beauty

The songs are written in a way where I'm looking for people who live with music and put on music when they exercise or run or drive or walk through their town or whatever. So the music is meant to be cinematic, in a sense—almost a background to your life. That's the way [music] had its biggest impact on me—on the subway, walking to class, looking out at the world through the lens of whatever music I was listening to. That's what I tried to create with this record. As long as it makes sense with what's going on in your world—I didn't pay much attention to the technical standards for what makes a good song. There's a real closeness and intensity between me and the guys in the band I have now, and that comes through. These players come from all diffe ent kinds of places, and where their personalities and tastes and music meet in the music we're making is cool because there's a lot of tension, a lot of beauty, a lot of emotion and soul.

Finding the Sound

We are pretty much sitting right now with a completed record. It's been a cool and interesting process making this album. This is the fir t time we didn't bring in any outside producer. For the last record, *Akeda*, we used friends of ours who we're close with: Stu, who plays bass, and Joel Hamilton, who helped with the production stuff. With this one, we went back to that situation but without any one member of the band doing a majority of the production work—rather, composing together and being on tour together and recording together and sharing the compositions, with everyone coming to the table and doing what we've been doing all year on the road. It's a cool way to develop a sound before you write songs—on the road, during jams and improvisations, figuring out, "Oh, we can go into that realm, or we can go here." We didn't know we could do this or that or even what our sound was with this group we have today. We've spent a lot of time over the year bonding and coming together to figu e out what that sound was, and then we came off the oad in September and spent a month in the rehearsal studio just writing, and then went in and did two weeks in the studio. I did all the vocals on my own, how I envisioned them.

Songs of *Youth*

When I started out, it was a real blend of genres. I relied on all the music of my youth to influence what I as making at that point because there was a break in time where I stopped listening to music when I became religious, until when my career started, when I started listening to music again. I remember on the fir t tour, when I bought a van, got out of Crown Heights and got out of the religious circles, I was with my band, and Aaron and I listened to what they listened to. I remember what was big then was The Flaming Lips, *Yoshimi [Battles the Pink Robots]* and *The Soft Bulletin*. We were listening to a lot of Elliott Smith. That was my fir t introduction back into popular music, and since then, it's taken up a big part of my life again.

Religious Journey

I went through that period of my life—and I don't even consider it a period because I see a life as one thing—but it left its mark on me to the point where it affected the ay that I see the world. Not that I necessarily see everything congruently with what that religion says, but it became the focal point I weighed my perception against, or one of the avenues, at least. So it affected me and it continues to affect me and the music that I make. I continue to ask questions about God and spirituality as a concept and what it means. I talk about that in my music a lot—analyzing what it is in my life, what place it takes. That's definitely been a cool journey throughout all the records and all the things that have influenced me along the way. You can see my philosophical and existential approach and the way I perceive things clearly in the lyrics all along this journey.

> "It was a process—a slow process—but, eventually, I was ready to open up to the world again."
> MATISYAHU

Opening Up

I never really approached [religion] as a public image—it was more a lifestyle. It took some time once I thought that I needed to open up and move on and try something else, try to incorporate outside elements back into my world that weren't from that religious place. It was a process—a slow process—but, eventually, I was ready to open up to the world again.

At that point, I made a distinction in my fan base and my career as to who was who in relationship to what I'm doing. It became clear to me at that point that there are people that become a fan of your image when you represent a group of people. But then there are the people who live with the music and are influenced by it. I found that they come from all these diffe ent walks of life—my fans. It was a blow to the people who weren't fans. So, it's sort of about condensing a little bit and figuring out who's who, who supports and who doesn't. In some ways, it's nice—a way of letting go of some of the pressure of trying to live up to the expectations of people who aren't really living with you in your music.

Brian Stollery

WOMAN AT WORK

Valerie June

Straight From the Well

It is two days after what is perhaps the biggest upset in presidential election history and the streets of New York City are unnaturally quiet. The city's overarching feelings are pivoting between stunned, scared and sad. But sitting in her apartment in Brooklyn, Tennessee-born Valerie June is already striking a brighter tone.

"On a day like today, I'm reminded that music is always touching people. I'm going to continue to shine my greatest light," she says. "I'm trying to focus on what I came to Earth to do."

June will shine her light brighter than ever when she releases her latest album, *The Order of Time*, in March through Concord Records. The album builds on the sparse, glimmering folk of her 2013 breakthrough, *Pushin' Against a Stone*, with chiming guitars, punchy drums and strings—a gorgeously starry sky to its predecessor's moonlit night.

At the center of June's music remains her crisp, unforgettable voice, which she discovered "sometime when I was singing at the top of my lungs and my mom told me to 'shut up with all that bellowing,'" she laughs. "To know I moved someone with my voice told me something."

But hers isn't the only great voice on *The Order of Time*. Norah Jones sings sultry backup on the party-starting closer "Got Soul." June's brothers and father also contribute backing vocals, which were recorded in the family's living room. While June credits the album's fuller, warmer sound to simply "listening to what the songs wanted," the flurry of New York City also painted its colors across these cosmic soul-blues tunes.

"Any place I drink water becomes part of my music, and I've been drinking water from a lot of wells," she says. "But here, everything is moving. It's a beautiful symphony to me." ***Justin Jacobs***

GROUP AT WORK

Midnight North

Terrapin Flyers

Danny Clinch (June)

It's mid-December and the year-end holiday season is in a full-spirited sprint to the finish. or Grahame Lesh, singer/guitarist of Midnight North, it's a welcome respite. "All of us are happy to be home for a little bit," says Lesh. "We've been playing a lot."

The quintet may be based just outside San Francisco in San Rafael, Calif., but the Marin County setting serves as more than just a domestic retreat. The Bay Area enclave is also the ensemble's workspace and the setting for their recurring Sunday-night gig at Terrapin Crossroads, the venue owned and operated by the Lesh family. The band recently released a digital exclusive culled from performances recorded at the music hall throughout 2016, the pay-what-you-wish live album, *Live at Terrapin Crossroads*, which presents a terrific sample of what the locals have been enjoying for nearly fi e years.

Lesh says this weekly residency has been essential to the development of Midnight North, whose existence has coincided with the lifespan of the venue, itself, a space that gives like-minded musicians in the neighborhood a communal clubhouse. Thanks, in part, to friends like Chris Robinson and Tim and Nicki Bluhm, the buzz around both the band and its Terrapin Crossroads base has evolved into something not unlike the late-'60s San Francisco scene of Grahame's father Phil Lesh.

"That community has been the most important thing," says Grahame. "There is a cool thing being built here and, for our band, it's an honor to be a part of it."

Yet, it's the weeks spent in a cramped van away from home that Lesh says has equally accelerated the group's progress. With an upcoming studio album nearing completion, he hopes to take what they've learned over the past six months on the road and consolidate that growth into the sessions. The record will consist of songs that have been extensively tour-tested, but don't expect this next record to be a mirror of a live show.

Instead, the album will weave the "escape valves" of Midnight North's extended improvisational sections into tight, concise studio arrangements. Though the band is producing the release, Lesh pointedly credits trusted engineer David Simon-Baker (Jackie Greene, Los Lobos) with keeping them focused.

Midnight North's live repertoire is also a showcase for the group's powerful three-part harmonies. On *Terrapin,* the trio of singers—Lesh, guitarist Elliott Peck and guitarist/keyboardist Alex Jordan—show off their dexterity on covers ranging from Crosby, Stills & Nash classics to the Dead-adopted "Viola Lee Blues." It's something, Lesh implies, that symbolizes and benefits the g oup in more ways than just musical.

"We are friends. I love singing with them. I love making music with them," he says. "We just want to show our best to the world and have a little fun each time we do." ***Larson Sutton***

5 ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Forlorn Strangers NASHVILLE, TENN.

ROOTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Forlorn Strangers boast a strong affinity for adition and tenacity. The group—which consists of **Benjamin Lusk** (vocals/banjo/guitar), **Chris Banke** (vocals/ guitar/ mandolin), **Hannah Leigh Lusk** (vocals/mandolin/percussion), **Abigail Dempsey** (vocals/ fiddle/pe cussion) and **Jesse Thompson** (vocals/bass/ dobro/guitar)—has racked up 20,000 miles crisscrossing the country, sharing a reverence for their roots and homespun harmonies. Likewise, their self-titled full-length debut reflects individual influenc that run the gamut from The Band and The Beatles to Crosby, Stills & Nash, and The Mamas & The Papas. A rustic regimen, highlighted by the interplay of vocals, guitars, banjo and mandolin tempers that template as well. "We each grew up in music-loving, church-going families, which lends itself to a great appreciation of traditional music and group singing," Hannah Lusk suggests. "Our roots run deep in tradition. Having that well helps us experience a diverse range of genres." The personal interplay also brings comparisons to Fleetwood Mac, given that the Lusks are married and Hannah and Abigail are sisters. "Our dynamic has stayed really healthy," Hannah insists. "The six of us traveled in a 1998 Dodge Maxiwagon without AC for 18 months straight, slept on floors and smelled eally bad. And yet we still like each other!" **forlornstrangers.com**

Lee Zimmerman

Yonatan Gat NEW YORK

ONE VOICE, MANY LANGUAGES

"I like this old-school, interactive, immersive element of the band improvising with the audience standing around them, which is very spellbinding for us and the audience because we really do something together," says **Yonatan Gat**. The New York-based guitarist co-founded the Tel Aviv-bred garage-rock band Monotonix in 2005 and, after nearly a decade on the road, started a project under his own name in 2014. Honing in on a sound that marries his punk roots with elements of avant-garde music, free jazz and psychedelia, Gat released his LP *Director* in 2015 and put together an improvisational trio whose lineup includes bassist **Sergio Sayeg** and drummer **Gal Lazer**. Instead of a traditional live setup, they play in a tight circle in the center of their audience—their improvisation is chaotic yet synchronized. The band is currently working on a new record that mixes in musical styles from Bali, India, Brazil, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Russia, and the members pepper their instrumental trance jams with lyrics in Hebrew, English and Portuguese. "When you let everyone play as individuals, you actually get a group, and everyone drifts toward a collective consciousness, and that's a very strong way of creating a band." **yonatangat.com** ***Kayla Clancy***

Dead 27s CHARLESTON, S.C.

SOULFUL SOUTHERN ROCK

"Our fans expect a diffe ent show every time they see us," says **Wallace Mullinax**, guitarist for Dead 27s. "We switch up the covers, but we also rework our original tunes. To an extent, nothing in the set is sacred."

Back in 2012 at Charleston, S.C.'s Pour House, the Holy City-based rock and soul fi e-piece came together for a friend's birthday party and "things clicked right away—everyone seemed to gravitate toward diffe ent roles that broadened the sound." They realized this was something special and the band—whose music is informed by everyone from Allman Brothers to Guns N' Roses to Bill Withers to Steely Dan—hit the road in 2014, releasing an EP, *Chase Your Devils Down*, that same year. "The South also has a certain influence that is undeniable in musical development," Mullinax says. "Down here, it better mean something when you play it—flash alone will not d ."

This fall, the band put out their full-length debut, *Ghosts Are Calling Out*, produced by Galactic's Ben Ellman and recorded in New Orleans. "Ben worked with us to cultivate our vision for the record," says Mullinax. "There was always a furious cycle of excitement and ideas."

During several writing trips to develop the demos, Dead 27s would bring gear and a recording rig and "lock ourselves away in some secluded location and hammer out ideas for four or fi e days. Most of the song ideas were built around a riff or hook someone brought in, but a few were developed from scratch on these weekends."

Next up, they'll be touring behind the new album and are also looking forward to returning to Floyd Fest. ("Dreams are made, and cellphones are lost, at that place.") From picking up an omnichord at Ani DiFranco's house, to learning the hard way that a diesel van freezes in the cold, to vocalist **Trey Francis** sitting in with Galactic at Brooklyn Bowl, Dead 27s already have a few stories from the road to tell.

dead27s.com *Amy Jacques*

Xylouris White MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

RHYTHM OF THE CRETE

"Black Peak," the title track and opener of the new **Xylouris White** record, sounds peppy and folkloric before it kicks into a thundering Zeppelin-ish jam that conjures seafaring warriors, ecstatic bards, wild goatherds and furies kicking up dust. Xylouris White is an enigmatic duo: **George Xylouris**, a lute player from Crete, who comes from a line of internationally famous traditional musicians, and **Jim White**, an indie-rock drummer known for playing in the Australian trio Dirty Three and for working with artists like Bonnie "Prince" Billy and Cat Power. This is their second album, but the two have been friends for 20 years or so. Xylouris' singing is more prominent on the new one, adding space and depth to the songs, a mix of originals and traditional material, some dating back centuries. This elemental music seems both ancient and vital. "Music in Crete is alive—it's not something we play and then put back in the cupboard," says Xylouris, who spoke by phone from a tour stop in Scotland. A song like "Forging" suggests flame , tongs, hammer and anvil with its rhythms and textures. White conceives of the music in visual and physical ways. Many of these songs are dance songs, and White works to advance that spirit. "One minute, I think I'm being the dancer," he says of his drumming. "Sometimes I think I'm the weather—and the voice is singing a song about being inside and being warm."

xylouriswhite.com *John Adamian*

Manolis Mathioudakis (Xylouris White)

Alex Izenberg LOS ANGELES

THE WORLD'S LA STORY

The debut album from Los Angeles' **Alex Izenberg**, *Harlequin*, floats a ound the listener like a SoCal breeze, and the talented singer-songwriter seems poised to follow Tobias Jesso Jr. as the next under-the-radar introspective phenom. A numer of Izenberg's musical friends fill out his s eletal song structures with lush strings and horns, along with album engineer JR White, who just so happens to have worked with Jesso Jr. as well. The 25-year-old Izenberg doesn't say much when conversing about his music, but it comes off mo e as a careful selection of words than indiffe ence or boredom. While it's been written that *Harlequin* is inspired by Izenberg's hometown, the Los Angeles native doesn't quite see it that way. "There's just so much going on; it's hard to call this an 'LA record,'" he says. "It's more of a 'world record.'" And there certainly is an undeniable sense of universality in the young musician's fir t effort, which is solidly anchored by songs like standout single "To Move On," a chunky, neo-soul earworm that showcases Izenberg's solid falsetto, and the gorgeous, piano-driven "Grace," proving that he's truly a fresh face to keep an eye on.

soundcloud.com/alexizenberg *Matt Inman*

IGE'S VENICE MUSIC AND ART IMMERSION

In early October, shortly before the presidential election results swept up the nation's collective attention span, a cross-generational cast of jam and roots musicians spent 10 days exploring ancient Venice as part of a unique destination event. The fir t IGE Venice Music and Art Immersion took place from October 3–13, featuring Peter Rowan, Amy Helm, John Kadlecik, Tim Bluhm, Scott Law, Ross James, Grahame Lesh, Durga McBroom, Barry Sless, Matt Butler, Christine Brebes, Yale Strom, Elizabeth Schwartz, Martino Coppo, Paolo Bonfanti, Roberto Bongianino, Max De Bernardi, Veronica Sbergia, Arthur Steinhorn, Said Chavoshbaran and Caterino Riccardi. The musicians performed in a variety of unconventional and historic spaces, joined by an intimate group of patrons who accompanied them to Italy. "Whether performing al fresco on vaporettos and in historic campos, or in down-home speakeasies, atmospheric restaurants, funky clubs, ancient hostels, sublime palaces or our own IGE palazzo headquarters, the musical explorations at the heart of the Immersion were often spontaneous, inevitably unique and utterly inspirational," Butler says of the trip. Veteran photographer Jay Blakesberg also made the journey and documented the festivities for *Relix*.

1. John Kadlecik, Grahame Lesh, Tim Bluhm, Amy Helm, Scott Law and Scott Padden jamming in Campo Santo Stefano (St. Stephen's Square)

2. Scott Law, Ross James, Matt Butler and Tim Bluhm next to the Santo Stefano statue

3. Tim Bluhm at the Venice canal near IGE headquarters

4. An Everyone Orchestra moment at the Generator with the conductor on the kit, along with Durga McBroom, Paolo Bonfanti, Roberto Bongianino, Barry Sless, Scott Padden and Scott Law

5. Italian washboard master Catarino Riccardi playing in Everyone Orchestra at the Generator

6. Pre-dinner canal-side jam with Ross James, Scott Law, Tim Bluhm and Scott Padden

7. Peter Rowan and John Kadlecik perform with Italian artists Max De Bernardi and Martino Coppo at Paradiso Perduto

8. Scott Law, Grahame Lesh, Ross James and Scott Padden strolling to a gig in Campo Santo Stefano Square

9. Vaporetto (water bus) jam

10. Gala concert finale at the alazzo Albrizzi

11. Peter Rowan takes over at the Palazzo Albrizzi

12. Amy Helm and the lads at the Palazzo Albrizzi

13. IGE Venice Immersion musicians and guests

Jay Blakesberg

JAPANDROIDS

BY EMILY ZEMLER

THEY SAY IF IT'S not broke, then don't fix it. ut that sort of wisdom is too conventional for Japandroids. The Vancouver duo, comprised of singer/guitarist Brian King and singer/drummer David Prowse, came out of their last album with the need to shake things up, even though nothing was really amiss. After touring on 2012's highly acclaimed *Celebration Rock*, the pair started writing new music but, this time, it was diffe ent. King had moved to Toronto while Prowse stayed in Vancouver, so they had to pen ideas separately before meeting up for several weeks at a time to go through the possible songs.

"It totally changed it," King says, calling from Mexico City, where he spends part of his time. "There was no way we were going to be able to work in the way that we used to. But, at the same time, while there was a little bit of uncertainty about how this would work in the beginning, it actually turned out to be a really positive thing for both of us. It totally rejuvenated the band in a way that you wouldn't think would be possible 10 years later."

The duo was still trying to plan for their third album, *Near to the Wild Heart of Life,* but they did know what they didn't want to do again this time around. "All of our early EPs and records were made in the same formula," King admits. "We knew specifically that e weren't going to do that. On our last record, we'd nailed it in terms of our original vision when we started the band and we decided, this time, we're going to throw caution to the wind and attempt to make a real studio record."

"We wanted the new record to take people on a bit more of a journey," Prowse adds. "We were both interested in having a wider range of sonic environments—bigger dynamic changes, a wider variation of rhythms and tempos, a wider range of instrumentation, etc. We definitely anted to open some doors that had been somewhat closed before."

The idea was to remove all the limitations and rules that had been in place on their prior albums while in the studio. The musicians used instruments other than their usual drums and guitar, and they didn't want to only record live takes of the music. If it sounded cool and they both liked it, then it could be a Japandroids song. "It forced us to broaden our ideas of what a Japandroids song even is," King says. "It makes us feel like maybe we're more than this one specific thing that we've figu ed out how to do really well. In some ways, it almost feels like starting a new band and doing your fir t record."

Of course, one of the most iconic things about Japandroids, who are now entering their tenth year as a band, is their massively impassioned live show. Onstage, the group offers a singular experience, pouring the energy of a fi e-piece into the room with just the two of them. So what happens when the band doesn't make a live album and doesn't necessarily plan for the live performances in the studio?

"There's definitely been a lot of trial and error, and the trial and error will continue," King says. "It reminds me of some of our fir t shows, getting up in front of people and not really being sure if it's going to work or not, and going for it and seeing what happens. That's introduced an element of chaos and uncertainty into the shows that maybe, by the end of touring on our last record, wasn't really there anymore. We knew what we were doing and we did it every night."

Now, they can bring something unique to the stage each night, changing the dynamic with every show. There's no one way the songs on *Near to the Wild Heart of Life* should be played, which means that each date of the band's extensive tour this year will be an individual occurrence. "If we spent a lot of time thinking about the live show, this record would have ended up being louder, faster and sounding much more similar to *Celebration Rock*," Prowse notes. "And while we are both very proud of that album, we weren't interested in repeating ourselves."

"There's a shift in our songwriting," King adds. "If you listen to our three albums in order, the second one has twice as many lyrics as the fir t one, and this one has twice as many lyrics as the second one."

That kind of ongoing metamorphosis seems important a decade down the road. Japandroids' fir t EP, *All Lies*, dropped in 2007, and their fir t album, *Post-Nothing*, came out in 2009. The duo credit their longevity to their chemistry, which King promises isn't perfect. It is, however, more than enough to keep the music fl wing.

"We're in a good place personally and professionally but, in 10 years, there's been a lot of ups and downs and rocky times," he says. "There's by no means a secret to keeping it together and making it a success. There's been times where it's felt like it was dangling by a fucking thread, I'll tell you that. But it's not like we're two guys who met on Craigslist. Our friendship goes back almost 20 years. There's a bond there that's bigger than the band."

"The biggest reason why Japandroids is still trucking along is that there is something Brian and I get from playing in this band that we can't get elsewhere," Prowse adds. "We both really enjoy playing the music we make and are still inspired by what we're doing with this band. So as long as we're still excited about what we're doing and where we can go from here, I don't see any reason to stop."

DELICATE STEVE

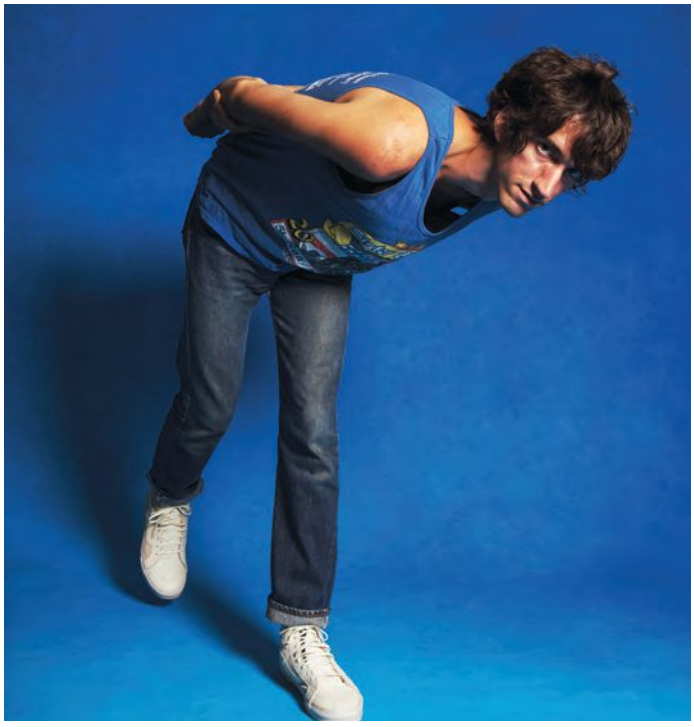
BY MATT INMAN

STEVE MARION didn't exactly hit the perfect note the fir t time he pressed a slide to his guitar strings. "I picked up a slide and put it down for like two years," Marion says, before quickly jumping into his love for the Allman Brothers, a band whose sound is equally synonymous with the steel instrument. "My favorite slide player is Duane Allman. He has so much control. I was like, 'There's no way I'm ever going to match that. Why even try?' But from there, one day, I just started playing it. It took a long time to pick it up seriously because it's so hard. Now, it just feels normal."

These days, the slide guitar is the not-so-secret ingredient in the music Marion makes as Delicate Steve, and it has been a focal point of nearly all of his compositions, including the 10 tracks that comprise his newest effort, *This Is Steve*. It's Marion's third studio album under the Delicate Steve moniker and fir t since 2012's sprawling and vivid *Positive Force*. Marion was far from idle in those four years, with extensive touring and numerous collaborations to his name, but when it came time to make another Delicate Steve album, there was a bit of a false start.

"I wanted to have singers on it, and I wanted to make it a huge-sounding thing," Marion says, explaining that he fir t took to the studio with dreams of making a record with multiple guest vocalists, such as Arcade Fire's Win Butler and David Byrne. (Marion's fir t two albums were released on Byrne's label.) "But it just got too far away from itself."

While he did end up end up recording music with Dr. Dog's Scott McMicken and Built to Spill's Doug Martsch, Marion ultimately scrapped the project and returned to a friend's studio for a completely fresh start—an approach he likens to how he recorded his bedroom-produced debut, *Wondervisions*.



Guy Eppel

"I made the *Wondervisions* record in about two weeks, and that was life-changing at the time because I had never finished a ything before," Marion says. "So I was like, 'I'm going to go in and I'm going to make a new record. I have 11 days in this studio, and I'm going to write all of the music and compose it, and not bring in any of the new ideas I've had over the past three years.'"

The resulting album, Delicate Steve's debut for the ANTI- label, seems to race by in flashes of color and bur ts of sound that leave the listener with more than a few earworm melodies buzzing around the brain. In contrast to much of Delicate Steve's music, which comes from Marion's love of production and studio work, the guitarist says that this record was inspired by his touring band, with whom he had spent months at a time on the road with since 2012.

"This was the fir t record where I was really psyched on the live band going into making a record," Marion recalls. "We were such a unit that I had envisioned playing all of these songs with the band. It's the fir t record where there's an actual acoustic drum kit, and the guitar sounds are more like a guitar. I was keeping the instrumentation as minimal as possible for the arrangements. That's where a lot of the sonic palette came from. Ironically enough, I have a whole new band now. I also didn't think that Donald Trump would be our president, so there's been a lot of surprises."

Although Delicate Steve's music rarely contains lyrics, Marion's guitar lines and melodies are as lyrical as they come. Sometimes, he says, that's intentional, as is the case with album track "Winners," whose melody begins with a guitar lick that Marion admits was directly inspired by Elton John's opening lyric in "Captain Fantastic and the Brown Dirt Cowboy."

Marion doesn't shy away from his inspirations, and he even recently had the opportunity to collaborate with one. Paul Simon—whose son Adrian is a friend—invited Marion to play slide guitar on his most recent album, *Stranger to Stranger*. The take they used on the album was actually the fir t one that Marion did in the studio, and he says the experience was like none other.

"As much as I grew up on Paul Simon, it was only after that I felt any sort of star-struck quality," Marion says. "It was, like, my friend's dad, and he was really nice—and I was really there to work. One thing I would say about it is the level we would get into the song. I haven't experienced that with many other musicians—if any."

Marion says that one of his biggest core influence , though, is The Band, whom he honored at Port Chester, N.Y.'s The Capitol Theatre during "The Complete Last Waltz" tributes in 2014 and 2016. Both times he shared the stage with fellow Jersey native and current Brooklynite Joe Russo. The two connected thanks to to a chance encounter at another suburban haunt and have even discussed starting a new project.

"I used to go to the YMCA near my house in New Jersey when I was still living there, and I was probably the only guy that goes there with long hair," he says. "One time, I was in the locker room, and I got singled out by this old geezer who was trying to start small talk with me, like, 'Nice day out today. What do you do?' Mind you, we're changing our clothes and everything. I say, 'Oh, I play music.' And he's like, 'Oh, cool. My son plays music.' And I say, 'Oh, yeah?' And he was like, 'Yeah, he plays with Phil Lesh.' I was like, 'Come on, what's your son's name?' And he says, 'Joe Russo.' So, basically, I met Joe Russo's dad half-naked in the locker room before I met Joe Russo."

URBAN LEGEND

Photo courtesy of inventor Ken Schaffer (on right.) August 24, 1977, Palladium, New York City.

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CHUCK LEAVELL

The Rolling Stones' longtime keyboardist and musical director on surviving Desert Trip, revisiting the blues and watching Paul McCartney fi t pump from side stage BY MIKE GREENHAUS

Leavell in Nashville, Tenn., with the Stones, June 2015

Rick Diamond/Getty Images

POSTCARDS FROM DESERT TRIP

We all felt some pressure that we had to be at our very best, and all of the artists more than rose to the occasion. We were on the fir t night, so we knew we had to set the bar high. You could feel the energy pouring out of everyone onstage, and we were all on our toes. The promoters laid it out so nicely, and that made for a nice, relaxed situation for everyone so we could all enjoy the experience. It was definitely a historic weekend of music. We tailored our sets to have the hits and well-known numbers in there, but also some more obscure pieces like "Sweet Virginia," "Live With Me," "Mixed Emotions" and some others. We also introduced songs from the new blues record, *Blue & Lonesome*. On the fir t night, we did "Ride 'Em on Down" and, on the following show the next week, we did "Just Your Fool."

We also threw in "Come Together" on the fir t night. That was [fellow Stones keyboardist] Matt Cliffo d's idea. He told me he tried to think of a Beatles song that the Stones could do outside of "I Wanna Be Your Man," which, as you know, was a Lennon/McCartney song that they wrote for the Stones. We've done that one before, and it went down well. But "Come Together" has a vibe that the Stones can do in our own way and it was an excellent choice. Matt suggested it to Mick, and Mick brought it to rehearsals. Paul loved it, and while he was watching our show that fir t night, gave a fi t pump when we did it.

DEEP CUTS AND "MIXED EMOTIONS"

I always look back at what we played the last three or four times we were in a city, so we don't just repeat ourselves and to see what might be interesting. And, yes, if the band has a new record, we want to feature something off of that. Venues certainly can dictate the viability of doing certain songs, so we look at it from many diffe ent angles. It is a very deep catalog and there are great songs from all the records and eras. For the Desert Trip gig, we pulled out "Mixed Emotions" from the '80s—that is an overlooked time for the band, and that song went down really well. But the fact is, we would have to do a six-to-eight-hour show to get all the tunes I'd like in there, and that is obviously not going to happen. So, we do our best to spread it around and cover as much of the band's career as possible, and pull out some rarities from time to time.

SOUTHERN TOUCH

I was not there when the basic *Blue & Lonesome* tracks were cut. As I understand it, the band went into the studio to experiment with some new things and someone, maybe Don Was, suggested doing a blues tune just to break things up and have some fun. They enjoyed it so much that they did another and another, and it went so well that, in three days' time, they had all the tracks. Then, when we were on the "Olé Olé Olé!" Latin American tour, both Mick and Keith told me they wanted me to be on it. With Don, we arranged for me to overdub my parts in a great new studio in New Orleans, The Parlor. I did most of it on a nice upright piano that they had there, which kept the sounds authentic. That is also the case with all the sounds on the record—really great guitar tones, drum sounds. Growing up in Alabama, I listened to a lot of blues, both on record and live. As we know, blues styles emanated from the South, the Delta. My fingers h ve a Southern accent.

FIRE AND ICE

I had heard of Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, but had never really dug into them [before Denson joined the Stones' touring band]. But I can tell you that when he showed up for his fir t rehearsals with us, he was more than prepared. He knew the tunes, and played with a beautiful blend of fi e and ice. He has such a cool and relaxed vibe, but blows with such spice and spark. Bobby Keys would be very proud and pleased. Tim Ries, who is also such a brilliant player, has been with us for some 16 or 17 years now, and he has stepped up as well since Bobby's passing. The bottom line is that the two of them are the perfect combination for the Stones now, and I've had the pleasure of playing with both Karl and Tim on gigs outside the Stones.

GILMOUR'S GUYS

Back in 1984, I was the musical director on a live broadcast for MTV called *Guitar Greats*. David was part of that show, and we got on well and had a really good gig. Some 10 years went by with no contact, and then he showed up at some rehearsals we did when I was playing with Eric Clapton in the early '90s. He invited me and a couple of other guys in the band to his house, and we had a nice, fun night drinking some fine wine and talking about music and life in general. I also saw David not long after that at a Paul Young concert.

Then another 15 go by with no contact and, one day, my wife is checking the messages on the guest book of my website and says, "Chuck, there is a guy here that says he is David Gilmour and wants you to contact him." I thought it was a scam, but figu ed I'd better check into it and, of course, it was him. We talked and he asked me if I was available to tour Europe [this past] summer. It was a lot of homework. David's music is more complex and requires a lot of finesse and detail. He sent me files of some li e shows he had done recently in South America, and I locked myself in a room with a piano and organ, and wrote charts to all of them and started learning the material. It was just one of the best experiences I've ever had playing and touring. I even got to sing the counterpart to "Comfortably Numb."

SON VOLT *Notes of Blue* BY DEAN BUDNICK

"I'VE ALWAYS wanted to do a recording that focused more on the blues. I've done a few blues-inspired songs over the years, but this recording was a chance to expand on it and, in particular, I wanted to explore the tunings and guitar voicings of Skip James and Mississippi Fred McDowell," Jay Farrar explains, when detailing the origins of Son Volt's new record, *Notes of Blue*.

However, Farrar did not solely draw inspiration from these two pioneering Delta blues players. He also identifies enigmatic British folk musician Nick Drake as an influenc .

Drake passed away in 1974 at age 26—in relative obscurity—after recording three albums, the best-known of which is 1972's *Pink Moon*. Farrar points to that title track, noting, "There's something magical about that tune in particular. There's just a haunting effect when you listen to his music. He's a master of his craft, and I don't know if there's ever been anyone before or since truly like him. He's one of the icons that I hold up there."

Initially, Farrar had two projects in the works, one of which he identifies as a Nick Drake-style English folk record." However, while working on this material and performing acoustic shows for nearly two years, Farrar had a hankering to pick up an electric guitar, "and that meant a Son Volt record." So he simultaneously began writing blues-based songs, with the two endeavors eventually converging.

Farrar fir t recognized this nexus through the sounds of another artist who is relatively unknown outside of musician circles: Jackson C. Frank, whose lone album released during his lifetime, before he passed away in 1999, was his 1965 eponymous record produced by Paul Simon.

"I was listening to Jackson C. Frank," Farrar remembers. "In fact, there's a bonus track of one of his songs called 'Yellow Walls,' which is offe ed on the website. Through learning more about Jackson C. Frank and finding out that ick Drake was a fan of Jackson C. Frank, and that both those guys were way into blues, there was a common theme, a common thread that brought both of the writing projects together."

Farrar adds: "There's quite a bit of commonality there; that's ultimately the conclusion I came to. Fingerpicking was one of the parallels. I had wanted to do more of that—I've only really fingerpic ed guitar on one Son Volt recording, the song 'Medication' on the Son

David McCister

Volt record *Okemah and the Melody of Riot*. I've just never really had the confidence to sit down and do it. But then, over the course of playing pedal-steel guitar in a honky-tonk band, I got more accustomed to fingerpickin , and I wanted to do more of it on this recording. That was one parallel that I saw between Skip James and Nick Drake. And, of course, I think Nick Drake was pretty heavily into the blues as well.

"Ultimately, I was aiming for where blues and folk and country converge. Getting back to playing electric guitar after a few years was a component, but it's a folk record, it's a rock record, it's a blues record—it's all of those."

PROMISE THE WORLD

"Promise the World" was inspired by Nick Drake's "Pink Moon." I originally wanted to do an entire English folk-inspired recording because I've always been mesmerized by Nick Drake's *Pink Moon* album in particular. The pedal steel and the fiddle on this song a e a bridge to the previous Son Volt record, *Honky Tonk*. That's Jason Kardong on pedal-steel guitar, which drives the song. Ultimately, the lyrics, "Light after darkness, that is the way," became a mantra and the genesis of the song.

BACK AGAINST THE WALL

"Back Against the Wall" was intended to be a rally song to take on adversity or to be a shield of sorts for challenges on the horizon—at least that's the way I thought about it. It has what may be the fir t electric guitar solo I've recorded on a Son Volt record in 20 years.

In the studio, we re-amped the Hammond organ sound through a small amp and I got to sit next to the amp and be the vibrato switch guy, which meant clicking the switch at various intervals to create vibrato swells. So now I've got "vibrato switch guy" going for me on my résumé. This song also came out of the English-folk batch of songs that I was writing, and it just got amped up along the way.

STATIC

The approach was fundamental and primitive on this one. It's mostly two chords with a third chord briefly th own in. Bo Diddley did all he needed to do with two chords, so I was shooting for that. The outro section—the electric slide part—is a tuning I learned from a lady at a folk festival in Canada, and that tuning utilizes all E-note octaves so, with a slide, the sound of all those E-note octaves is like a bombastic sitar.

CHEROKEE ST.

"Cherokee St." was written with a Skip James Bentonia tuning. It's a D-minor based tuning that supposedly has its origins in the Bahamas. This was the fir t electric song we recorded in the studio.

Just learning the tuning of an icon and a hero like Skip James, to me, was the reward for the process. Again, one thing in common with Nick Drake is that I've always felt that there was a mystique attached to his tuning, as well as a high-pitched haunting effect f om his vocal style. So I wanted to get inside that tuning and see where it went.

It was a primitive setup at fir t, just with me on guitar and Jacob Edwards on drums. Mark Spencer added the bass later. For this song, I pulled out an old Webster Chicago amp, which I'd used on the fir t Son Volt record, *Trace*. It's the amp that's pictured on the cover. The amp just had the right character and sonic aesthetic for this song.

There's a reference in the song about how the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world. That's something I often think about. On the upside, there's a vibrant street in St. Louis called Cherokee St., and that's where the title came from—where you can see the smile of a Cherokee St. girl and get a very good taco as well. The street's a mixture of Mexican restaurants and shops blended with a new hipster scene.

THE STORM

With "The Storm," I wanted to explore a more fingerpickin -style guitar. Like I mentioned, the last time I recorded fingerpicking as back on the song "Medication" in 2005. Since then, I've played steel in a honky-tonk band and become more confident at it, so I went for it on this song, which was written in the Fred McDowell tuning.

This was the last song recorded during the *Notes of Blue* session. It was in the middle of February, so I was definitely thinking about California. This song was inspired by a traditional theme. To me, the storm can be a metaphor for any kind of adversity.

LOST SOULS

Over the years, since starting out in music, I've noticed a pattern of seeing engaging and creative bands along the way, and then never hearing them again. For whatever reason, they left the music business, and "Lost Souls" is a song to them—to the bands and performers you'd hope to see again but never did. It's equal parts looking back at how we got here and where we go next.

Hunter S. Thompson and Captain Beefheart h ve some pretty powerful quotes about the music business. It was just a pattern that unfolded again and again over time. It always seemed to me that often the very best and most creative people didn't even really have a chance to get out and tour; they just drifted away.

MIDNIGHT

"Midnight" references the traditional theme of hell and the hope of redemption. I played my guitar through an old bass amp that was lying around Red Pill Studio here in St. Louis. I played guitar through a bass amp to get a deeper, heavier-sounding guitar. Not only was it a bass amp, but it was a solid state bass amp, which all guitar players will agree is the sound of hell because it just puts out a type of distortion that's strident and can be grating. But I thought it fit the subject matte .

SINKING DOWN

"Sinking Down" incorporates a bottleneck slide with a Mississippi Fred McDowell tuning. It's about as low as you can go, maybe the quintessential blues tuning. The lead guitar paired with the main guitar is also using the slide but with a diffe ent tuning—all C octaves. I have a recurring daydream that the song gets pitched to ZZ Top and they do it with the whole video treatment.

CAIRO AND SOUTHERN

Cairo was a busy stopover town in southern Illinois back in the day, by boat or train from St. Louis to the south, or the other way around. Now it's a sleepy town with not much population. It's just a place you drive through, but it's got some architectural gems and has potential for revitalization.

This song was played on a low-tune baritone guitar. It was also the fir t tune recorded for the session. The session started off spacey with this song an then we pulled out amps for "Cherokee St." and that was the fir t electric song on the session. I think the meaning of "Cairo" is that it doesn't have to be the town Cairo; it could be representative of any place you get away to find ourself through diffe ent surroundings.

THREADS AND STEEL

Everyone has experienced this guy—I've definitely seen him in the music business. He's the guy who tells you, in so many words, to take your music elsewhere. Maybe there's some Donald Trump in there somewhere, too. I had a friend in grade school who used the expression "go-to-hell hat," and I've always wanted to put that in a song, so I finally got that done.

CHARLEY RYAN

BY BRADLEY TUCKER

"The lead singer blew a big wad of spit into the audience, and it landed on this girl's shoulder. Her boyfriend became enraged like a bull and, instantaneously, he leapt onto the stage and went flying th ough the air, horizontally, toward the lead singer. It was not an act. It was absolutely not planned at all, and the band looked at each other like, 'What do we do?'

"I was standing right there and said, 'I don't care what you do—this is rock-and-roll!' Those are the kinds of things that are just so much more fun, besides just having unbelievably great performances, because they are live and you don't expect them to happen."

That memory comes from Charley Ryan as he reflects on his time as general manager of New York's Wetlands Preserve. More recently, he co-founded Brooklyn Bowl, partnering with *Relix* publisher and former Wetlands owner Peter Shapiro.

"Nothing makes you feel more alive than the unexpected," says Ryan. "We had Elvis Costello and The Roots perform their album at the club. Fantastic show, but it lifted into the stratosphere when Elvis and The Roots' Captain Kirk got into an epic guitar battle on Elvis' song, 'I Want You.' Afterward, Kirk told me, 'I had no idea he could do that!'"

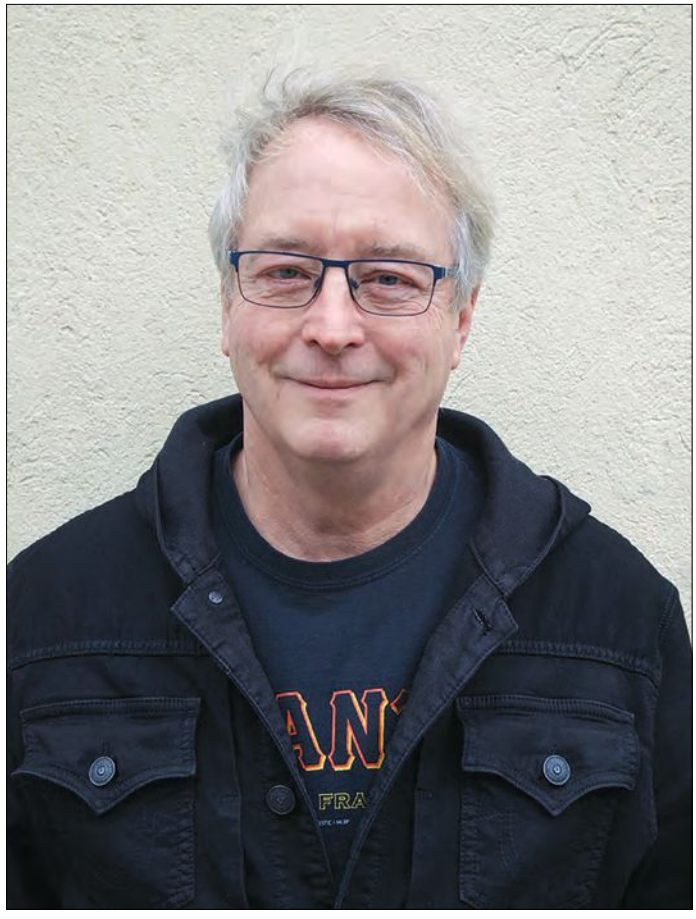
How did you start working in music venues?

Growing up in Michigan, I DJ'd all the dances as a freshman in high school. Then, some friends put a band together, and I managed them. My proudest moment was getting them two gigs in one night, each paying $400. $800 was a fortune in the late '60s. I seemed to know more than other kids because I probably cared more about what was going on with music. In the summer of '69, I couldn't persuade anyone to hitchhike to New York for a music festival. They all thought I was crazy, but when I stumbled home all mud-splattered, I was a local celebrity. Everyone wanted to know what Woodstock was really like.

I finished high school in New Jersey and started at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire in the fall of 1970. They asked me to be on the booking committee. That didn't last a month because the fir t decision was between a package of two horn bands—If and Ten Wheel Drive—and a single rock band. I pleaded for the rock band, the Allman Brothers Band, but was outvoted. I told the committee, "Sorry, I can't do this anymore." Eventually, I withdrew from college and went to California. I worked in music clubs in Marin County and for Bill Graham at Winterland.

You eventually went back and finished school at Dartmouth, moved to San Francisco to pursue a career in finance and, ultimately, wound up in New York working at Wetlands. How did that happen?

Yes, I was a stockbroker for Dean Witter in San Francisco, but that's just glorified sales and was a little boring. And New York was calling my name. So I came to New York and worked at the insane commodities exchange, trading precious metals futures at the World Trade Center. That was 5,000 people altogether, open outcry. It was exciting, and I did well. Then I left and started a physical commodities trading firm, buying and moving actual gold and silver from Africa and South America to North America.



Now that is a long story, but, ultimately, I realized that life was counterfeit for me. So I quit and started over, fir t in restaurants and bars. I became a partner in a couple of places, but the live music component was lacking. I had to get back into that. One night, I made a vow to get work in a music club. The following night, I was introduced, by chance, to Otis Read, who was GM of Wetlands at the time. It turned out that he was looking for a manager. It was 1994. I interviewed with the owner, Larry Bloch, and, shortly after, I got the gig.

It's important to say that there was just one manager per night at Wetlands. Maybe the place could've used two. I don't know, but there was just one person really leading the production and coordinating everything that needed to be coordinated. That included paying the bands, making sure there was ice—which there usually wasn't—and making sure there was change, which, at the beginning of the night, there usually wasn't. Wetlands was a wonderful place, but it was wonderfully disorganized and it was always a challenge to make the pieces fit during the night because of that.

What was an early influence on your career?

A lot of it is actually trial by fi e—getting into situations where a lot of advance tickets had been sold, but the money hasn't been held through payment and you need to somehow sell enough booze or sell enough extra tickets

that you can pay the artist at the end of the night. Basically, doing whatever you need to do in order to get that done and keep everybody as happy as you can.

In terms of influence , Bill Graham and Larry Bloch taught me a lot, mostly indirectly. Damn, wouldn't Larry love being mentioned with Bill Graham? [*Laughs*.] But I also learned from [talent buyers] Chris Zahn and Jake Szufnarowski, and, of course, Peter Shapiro, too. Once I started to work at Wetlands, I was around Larry, and I had an interesting relationship with him, but I really loved and liked Larry, and I thought the two-headed monster in his mind of joining music equally with social activism and environmental concerns was a brilliant thing. It was the quintessential business that means something in a world where most businesses make money and they don't have roots; they don't do anything outside of making money. They're not actually connected with the community except for the fact that they're there.

I learned that it doesn't matter what others think, and, mostly, they don't care that much anyway. I was never a jock, in terms of a straight mentality, but I was a very serious competitive swimmer and my coaches taught me how to focus and constantly improve. Never be complacent—that's still central for me. My brother instilled that, too. And my dad treated everyone like his best friend, with total dignity and respect.

Wetlands closed in 2001 and, eventually, you and Pete opened Brooklyn Bowl together. How did you come up with that concept?

The genesis of Brooklyn Bowl came out of a Wetlands staff party. In 2000, Pete and I took the staff out to a b wling alley, and when we got together the next day and shared comments on what had happened, we agreed that it was weirdly expensive, but everybody had a great time and really became childlike and dropped their guard. It was a beautiful thing to see and the magic ingredient was bowling.

We started to brainstorm because the place where we had been, in our estimation, had terrible food and terrible service. It wasn't clean; there wasn't live music and the sound quality of the recorded music was atrocious. Really, everything about it was not good at all, yet everybody had a great time because of the bowling, and we thought, "Well, let's see if we can come up with a design where we can fuse great food and drink and live music and video and bowling into a place of wonder."

Wetlands closed as 9/11 happened. Peter had all kinds of other projects of his own, and so did I. For my part, I was shook by 9/11 and wanted to do community and charitable work. Still, every few months, one of us would call the other to say, "Let's get back together and go look for a location for our idea." That idea became Brooklyn Bowl, but it took years because our search was so sporadic. [*Ed Note:* The original Brooklyn Bowl eventually opened in 2009. The club also launched outposts in London and Las Vegas in 2014.] But the time allowed us to realize some possibilities in the concept and design, which made the result much better.

How has your role changed from then to now?

In the process of coming up with the plan and building out the space, we had some frustrations with the architects that we were trying to use and they didn't think as environmentally as we needed them to. I had started to draw up what I wanted and they still didn't get it; so, almost by default, I ended up being the person who designed these spaces. I got into the décor and the look and the feel and what kind of pin spotters and what kind of energy devices we were going to use. I even studied HVAC systems for a while. That became my specialty, and I'm proud of the places that we built in Las Vegas and London in subsequent years, which are fundamentally my designs, in terms of the physical layout of the place [and] in terms of how they function.

You need people who are doing the nuts and bolts work of the operations, but you also need people who are looking at it from a little bit higher of an elevation—and have the opportunity to make things a little bit better or a little bit diffe ent. You can't expect people who are doing the everyday business to come up with that kind of thing so, really, what's happened over time is Pete does that and I do that and occasionally other people do that, too.

Has your job changed from when you started?

Everything has changed, and nothing has changed. If we start my timeline in 1994 with Wetlands to today, then the music business has morphed into something almost unimaginable from just 20 years ago. But we are in the live music and entertainment business, and everything still revolves around great relationships with people: the agents, managers, the musicians, our guests and our employees. Without all these people, we have nothing; and with them, everything is possible. That's something I'm aware of each and every day. I guess my job is to help make everyone in our world feel valued and part of our community—something that transcends being just another business.

In the old days, acts did live shows as a way of promoting their recorded product. Now, they make a recorded product so they can make more money on the road. If we bring it to focus with Brooklyn Bowl, then I think we've gotten better in terms of what programming works in each location. We are more aware of which places are more conducive to multi-night runs, and how to make those really sing and appeal to people who are into that particular act. Recently, someone showed me some statistics from Pandora and Spotify—what the college-age demographic is listening to right now—and it's fundamentally diffe ent. It's not just electronic dance music or that kind of shift. What does that mean for the future? We try to think about that and not to pander to anything that's a trip or a blip momentarily, but to think about how we adapt and change places and build places that are really appealing for people to come to.

"Everybody had a great time and really became childlike and dropped their guard. It was a beautiful thing to see and the magic ingredient was bowling." CHARLEY RYAN

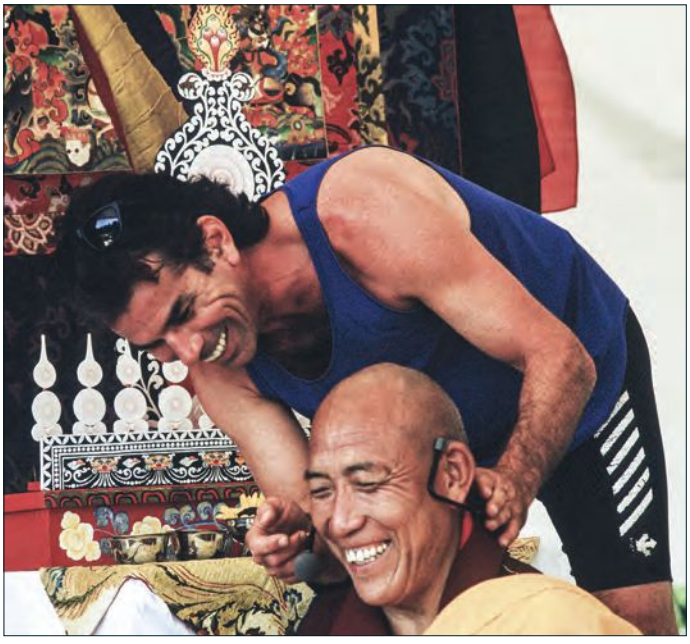
SUSANA MILLMAN

In *Alive With the Dead,* photographer Susana Millman shares her unique perspective on the Grateful Dead. Jerry Garcia introduced the photographer to her future husband, Dead publicist—and later biographer—Dennis McNally, so she was on hand to capture the band members and their extended families in a variety of intimate settings. Millman collects many of these images in her new book, which sold out of its fir t printing, but is now available at mamarazi.com.

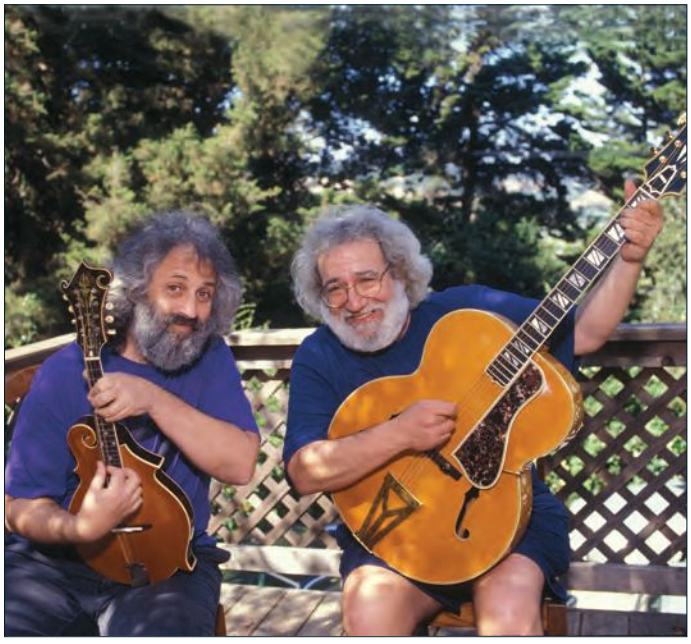
On Sept. 29, 1985, I married Dennis McNally, and Jerry walked me down the aisle at the Oasis Club in San Francisco. He'd been our matchmaker and my father was long gone, so I asked. There was a covered swimming pool there, and I told him he could walk on water.

Bobby and Bonnie Raitt during an interview about the Forever Green environmental benefit, Chez eir, 1997.

The "Hell in a Bucket" video shoot, New George's Bar, San Rafael, Calif., September 1987.



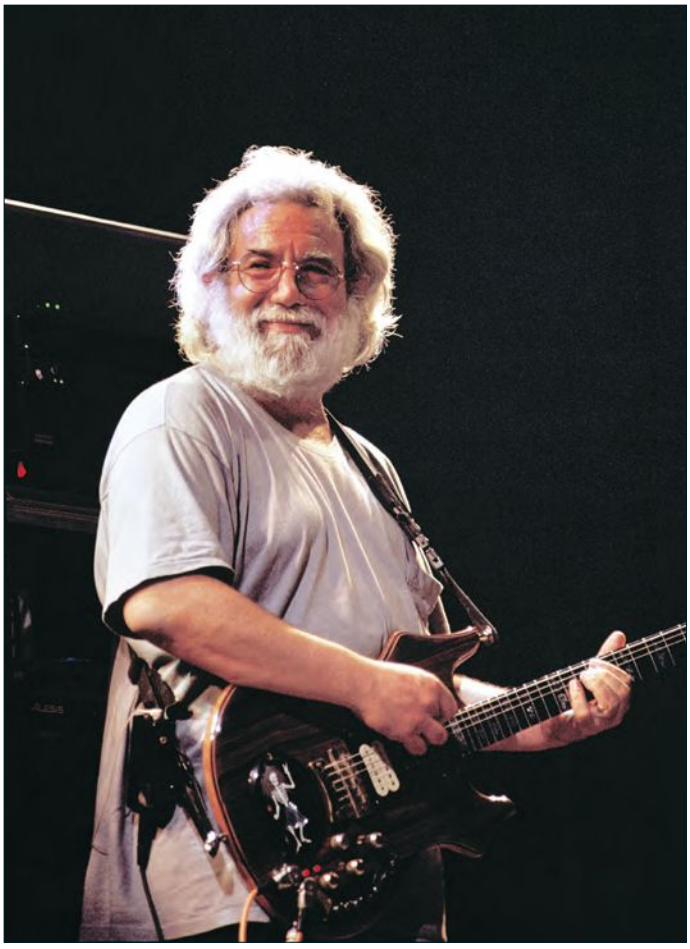
Mickey adjusts headphones for the monitor system at a performance by the Gyuto Monks at his home, 1991.



Jerry and David Grisman at Dawg's house, Mill Valley, Calif.—it was shot for the *Not for Kids Only* back cover.

The band reacts in unison to an incredibly dumb question during their 20th anniversary press conference, Greek Theatre, Berkeley, Calif., June 14, 1985.

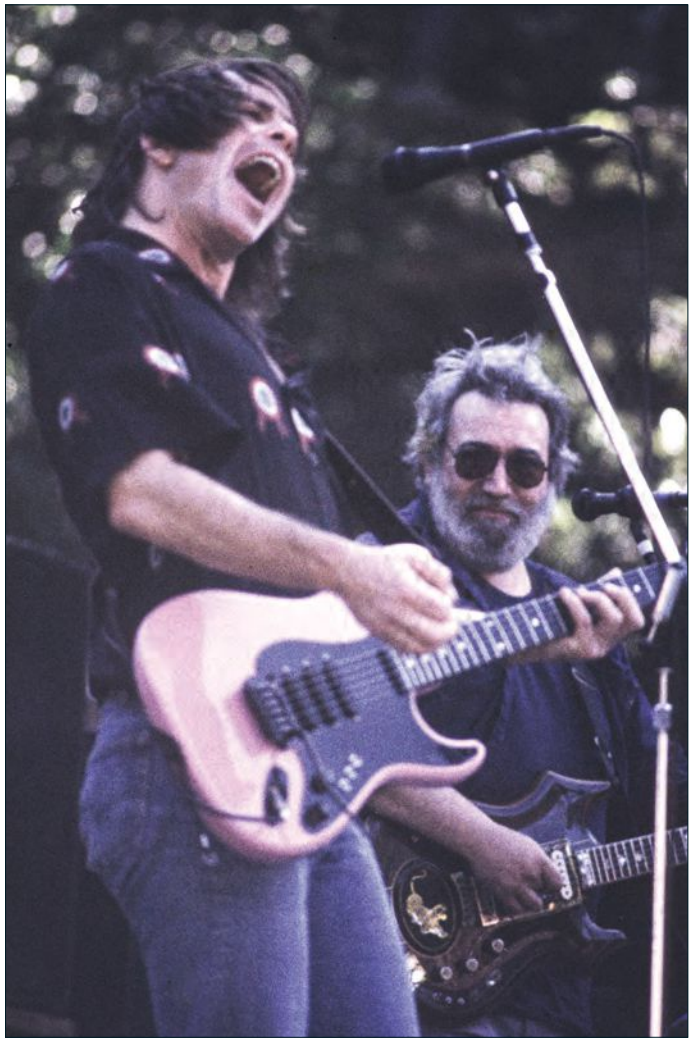
Merl Saunders, post-stroke, gets up to dance with Carolyn "M.G." Garcia at his 70th birthday party—a truly sweet moment.



Jerry singing "Gloria" during an encore—maybe my favorite shot of him ever, Jan. 26, 1993.

Jerry and Bobby sign baseballs before singing the national anthem for the San Francisco Giants' Opening Day at Candlestick Park, April 12, 1993.

Bobby toasts his bride Natascha, as only Bobby could, complete with a quote from Smokey Robinson: "You better shop around" (and he did), Mill Valley, Calif., 1999.



Bobby being Bobby and Jerry giving him "the look," Frost, May 1988.

WORKINGMAN'S BLUES

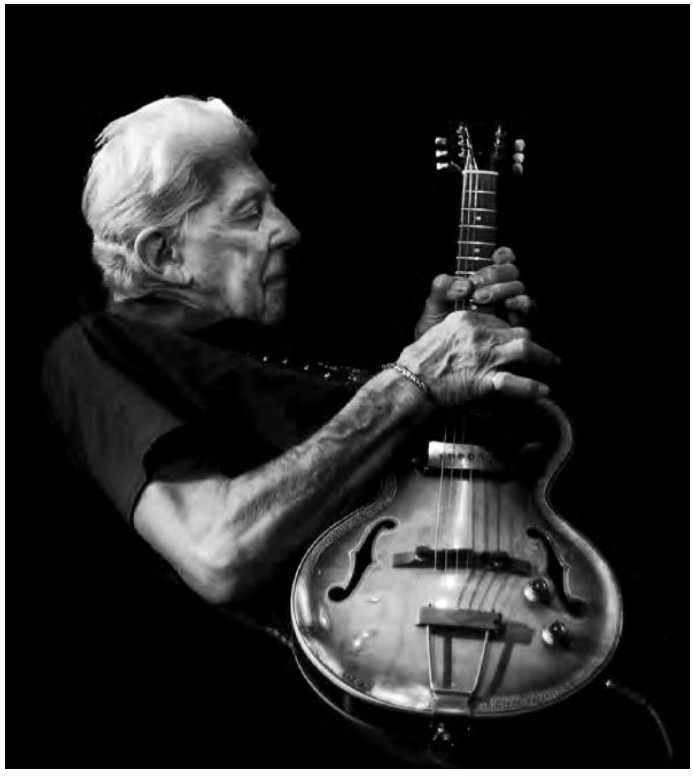
After making music for nearly six decades, blues-rock maverick John Mayall is still happy, humble and hungry for more. BY BILL MURPHY

ONE OF THE more poignant lyrics from John Mayall's latest album, *Talk About That*, quite possibly his 41st studio outing (at this stage, he doesn't keep track), comes from the rabble-rousing title song: "There's always something gonna set you back, but I'm not gonna live in fear." As prescient as that may sound in this sweat-soaked aftermath of an election year, he never meant it as a political statement.

"People who come to hear me, they come to hear the blues and rock-and-roll," Mayall says, taking a break between dates on a U.S. tour that has brought him through a clutch of Midwestern swing states in September and October. "I don't think politics ever comes into their minds. And the blues are always optimistic, whatever the situation is, so that's really the message behind that song."

In interviews, Mayall's Zen-like demeanor—cordial yet reserved—sometimes gets misinterpreted as brusque. Chalk it up to his British upbringing, or his longtime residency in California (he moved there in 1969), but one thing is certain: He's perfectly content to let his music do the talking for him. Since 1963, when he founded his now-legendary Bluesbreakers band, he's been a benevolent fixtu e behind the keyboard, providing the fir t prominent gigs for some of the U.K.'s most brilliant and incendiary guitarists—Eric Clapton, Peter Green and Mick Taylor among them. In the ensuing decades, he's also been a lightning rod for keeping the blues alive here in its home country, racking up live dates and key recordings with John Lee Hooker, Albert King, Buddy Guy, Etta James, Albert Collins, Allen Toussaint and many more.

Mayall signed to the Forty Below label in 2013 and, since



Cristina Arrigoni

then, he's released three studio albums and two live sets—the latter a cache of "lost tapes" documenting the historic 1967 lineup of the Bluesbreakers. An invaluable find for British blues aficionado , the performances are daunting testaments to how locked and loaded the band truly was; in archival press photos that accompanied the 2016 release of *Live in 1967 – Volume Two*, guitarist Peter Green, bassist John McVie and drummer Mick Fleetwood (all destined to jump ship to form Fleetwod Mac later that year) look as though they've just bounded out of a Soho record shop in the heart of Swinging London, ready to electrify the youth explosion.

"Yeah, Mick Fleetwood looks like a little boy!" Mayall quips. "They'd all just gotten over being teenagers but, you know, we worked every night. It was seven days a week—sometimes nine gigs a week if we had all-nighters. We were definitely a club band, and the audience was right there in front of us, all standing there and sweating and drinking. That kind of energy is what we were all about back then in the '60s. Alexis Korner and Cyril Davies brought the electric blues into those clubs, and we were there when it took over."

Talk About That channels a much more refined ersion of that energy, but still surges with the sheer joy and ace musicianship that drives any Mayall project. Joined by guitarist Rocky Athas, bassist Greg Rzab and drummer Jay Davenport, Mayall taps into the rhythms of New Orleans ("Gimme Some of That Gumbo," rendered complete with a lively horn section), straight-up Chicago-style shuffles Cards on the Table," with none other than Joe Walsh on slide guitar) and vintage, uptempo romps ("Goin' Away Baby," with Mayall's mean harmonica recalling Little Walter's licks on the original Jimmy Rogers version, circa 1950). And then there's "The Devil Must Be Laughing"—a slow-cooked scorcher featuring Walsh on lead guitar and Mayall on his signature Hammond organ.

"Having Joe on the album was a big surprise to me," Mayall reveals. "Apparently, he just contacted the studio and said he was interested in coming down. I didn't really know much about his playing in the blues category, but I figu ed he's a great enough guitar player, so if he wants to do it, he must have some ideas. I mean, every great player has something that sets them apart from other people so, in this case, you just leave them to it. He came in for an hour and did the two tracks, and it was very successful."

Now a youthful 83, going on 60, Mayall took the bold step of stripping his band down to a trio in August, after severe thunderstorms in Texas forced Athas to miss a festival date. The show had to go on and, in the process, Mayall discovered he had more room to stretch out; Athas understood the attraction and graciously agreed to step aside. Not only does the new format highlight Mayall's lyrical, economical style on keyboards, guitar and harmonica, but it also places the full weight of the performance firmly on his shoulders—a challenge he welcomes with matter-of-fact enthusiasm.

"When you have only three people, the interplay is much freer, and there's more to explore," he reveals, "but I'm just doing exactly what I usually do. I never really learned to play keyboards in the proper way, so I keep it very simple. Of course, I try to get very spontaneous performances, reacting to the rhythm section. I don't know how to explain it any other way. I just attack it with feeling and do the best I can."

GILLIAN WELCH

BY DEAN BUDNICK

"WE'D BEEN thinking about this for some time," Gillian Welch reveals as she reflects on her new archival release, *Boots No. 1: The Official evival Bootleg.* Welch and musical partner David Rawlings combed through an extensive collection of recordings associated with their debut album, 1996's *Revival* (including demos, live performances and alternative studio takes), in order to select the material that appears on the new two-disc set.

T Bone Burnett produced the Americana milestone after witnessing a performance by Welch and Rawlings at Nashville's Station Inn. The ensuing collaboration would not only bear fruit on *Revival*, but also on 2000's landmark soundtrack to *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, which was produced by Burnett with the assistance of Welch and Rawlings' visions and voices. *Boots No. 1,* which includes eight previously unreleased songs, supplies a richer context for enjoying *Revival* and is a rewarding offering in its wn right. Moreover, as its name also suggests, the release is the initial installment of a new series from Welch's Acony label.

Welch and Rawlings around the release of Revival

The release of *Boots No. 1* marks two decades since Almo Sounds issued *Revival*. Was the anniversary the sole consideration that led you to revisit this material or was there another precipitating factor that led you to issue it as the debut of your new *Boots* series?

The 20-year anniversary of the record kind of pushed us to do it *now*. I won't really speak for Dave, but I was almost a little embarrassed that we had all these tapes and we'd never done anything with them.

We started to go back and look at the *Revival* outtakes 10 years ago, just to see what we had because from the moment when we started our own record label, around the time of *Revelator*, we've been in possession of all the tapes. So, we had access to them, and we made an initial foray 10 years ago to see what there was, but then we put them back on the shelf.

And then, here comes the 20th anniversary and, as I said, it was a little bit of an embarrassment for me. We'd been taping all the live shows, and we had home-demo tapes, just tapes and tapes and tapes. We wanted to crack open the door to get ourselves thinking about how to deal with all this unreleased material that we have. So this time, we finally did it.

It was almost like a mental game for me to think about this whole other series—this whole archival arm of the label—to diffe entiate it from the new releases. So that's what the *Boots* series is. I find it helpful and I think Dave finds it helpful. That's how it started.

Do you already have something in mind for *Boots No. 2*? You mentioned live recordings, so will it be an archival performance?

We kind of know what *No. 2* will be, but I don't think it will be live. But I do think that will happen, eventually. Going through the process of curating this bootleg, we've already bumped into a couple of early shows of ours right around the *Revival* time. There are complete shows that are nice—either just preceding or right after making *Revival*.

I would put them out in their entirety because I think they are a nice snapshot of that moment in time. There's some unexpected stuff. There are some shows where Dave goes over and picks up an electric during the show. It wasn't quite so formalized as it is now. But, yeah, I think it will be an outlet for live recordings.

John Patrick Salisbury

As you spent some time with all the music from the *Revival* era while preparing this release, what, if anything, did it reveal to you?

We'd barely done any studio recording prior to the *Revival* sessions. There were just a handful of demos, but nothing like a record session where you're in there for weeks. I thought it was interesting how both Dave and I heard our singing change. I learned to sing—or sing diffe ently—over the course of the session because it's probably the most singing I had ever done. Playing a show a night—that's a lot of singing. But being in the studio for 8-10 hours a day, every day for weeks—that is a diffe ent thing. I became much more of the singer I am now during those sessions, and I was surprised to find that I could hear it happen. A lot of people have commented on the singing, although they don't know, necessarily, that that's what they're hearing.

Can you talk a little bit about the discovery and evolution of your vocal blend?

Dave and I had sung together in country bands and bluegrass bands in Boston. Then, in the summer of '92, we both moved down to Nashville and away from our other musical pals. That was the fir t time we ever sang and played with just the two of us. So we started doing the same thing we would do in Boston—we started playing bluegrass classics. We sat down in his kitchen and the fir t song we played was "Long Black Veil." Then, we played "Rank Stranger" and, when we stopped and compared notes, we both said, "Wow, we've got a pretty good natural blend." We agreed that our voices basically had something good together.

Of course, over the years, that has become more so. Now we have identical vocabulary. We've been singing together so long that all of our inclinations are completely in sync. So it's even better now, but back then we did have some natural affini .

I credit Dave with then saying, "OK, we need to play now as much as we can." At the time, the only thing available to us in town were these writers' nights at a bar or a hotel lounge—they'd have these writers' nights where you would go in, and you put your name on a list and waited. You'd wait and you'd wait and you'd wait and then, eventually, they called your name and you got up, you played two songs, and then you went home. We started doing this as much as we could stomach: three, four nights a week. There were lots of writers' nights in town of varying levels of reputability. If they went well then, eventually, you'd get booked for a 20-minute slot somewhere and work your way up the food chain.

Then we got a three-hour gig on a weeknight at a bar down by Elliston Place from 7 to 10 p.m., and I just remember that because I had only written three songs, so we'd play one original per hour. [*Laughs*.] All the rest were covers: Stanley Brothers and Woody Guthrie and The Carter Family, and all the singer-songwriters that I was influenced y like Robert Earl Keen, Nanci Griffith, an I guess there would be a Bob Dylan song in there because we used to do "Oxford Town" in that set. And all that was important for getting our sound together. Every show we ever played working up to *Revival* was a duet show. Our band was a duet.

So, when you would perform with Dave in those groups up in Boston, the two of you would never just sit together and play as a duo?

No, we never did. There were always other musicians around.

Thinking back to your time at Berklee [College of Music, which she attended with Rawlings], what did you take away from that experience?

In some weird way because I seemed to like this kind of music that not too many people were into up there, it bolstered and strengthened my aesthetic and opinions. Most people had no idea what I was talking about if I said The Stanley Brothers. There was no discussing it. So I just didn't have any conversations about the stuff I eally liked. And I think that ended up being really valuable for both Dave and myself because we just had our opinions and it didn't matter. [*Laughs*.]

But in a way, that was born out of the school environment, where it didn't matter that the other people were practicing Yngwie [Malmsteen] licks. It didn't matter. What was I going to do? Was I going to talk to them about what's incredibly ecstatic and transportive about The Stanley Brothers' singing? No, I was just going to listen to it, and know it in my heart, and then try to do that.

It made us strong, so that when we got to Nashville, where people did know about The Stanley Brothers and, of course, they knew about Bill Monroe, we already had our heads straight. So that when it came to all that subtle stuff, the more insidious stuff, where they try to move you away from what you like, it was still the same answer: "No, this is what I like."

Were you aware that T Bone Burnett was in the audience the first time he came to watch you perform?

No, but as soon as he introduced himself, I knew who he was. It's funny how I knew him, though. It wasn't his most famous work. Well, I don't want to make Peter Case feel bad by saying that, but it probably wasn't the record that most people would have associated him with because I think he'd already done the pretty big Los Lobos record [*How Will the Wolf Survive?*], and some Elvis Costello stuff *King of America*, *Spike*]. But as soon as he shook my hand and introduced himself, I said, "Oh, you made that fir t Peter Case record," which was a very big record for me in the '80s.

That was Peter Case's fir t solo record after The Plimsouls. In the '80s, with all its '80s-ness, that record was like the little signpost for "Hey, look over here, there's this other stuff." There were bands like that in the late '80s who just started veering off t ward folk or acoustic or something. They might have fringe on their shirts or they might wear cowboy boots, or they might sing a George Jones song in their encore. [*Laughs*.] There was not a scene, there was just all this other stuff—that's how it was then.

Of course, there were also other people like Norman Blake. There has always been the alternate universe, where Norman would just let the world go by around him, and he would be there doing his thing. We're kindred spirits with Norman Blake. We'd go down there and pick until our asses hurt and we had to stand up. We're a little of the same cloth.

***Boots No. 1* opens with "Orphan Girl," and there are two versions of the song on the release. By the time you recorded that tune, there were already two well-known interpretations of it out there in the world [by Emmylou Harris and Tim and Mollie O'Brien]. Did that get in your head or influence you in any way as you were trying to record your version?**

Recording "Orphan Girl" was hard. It had a couple of things that made it difficult. That as the oldest song coming into the record. It was one of the fir t songs I wrote when I moved to Nashville. So I had been singing it for the longest time, but I was a bit distant from the inspiration of writing it. It was already known out in the world with a couple stellar versions—Tim and Mollie's version of it and Emmylou Harris' version of it.

And also, for at least a couple of years, I'd had every writer in every writers' night that we'd done just basically tell me, "Wow, that was an incredible song. That's your best song." So I wanted to do it justice. I started to get kind of anxious like, "Wow, I have to record the ultimate version of this song." It made it difficult

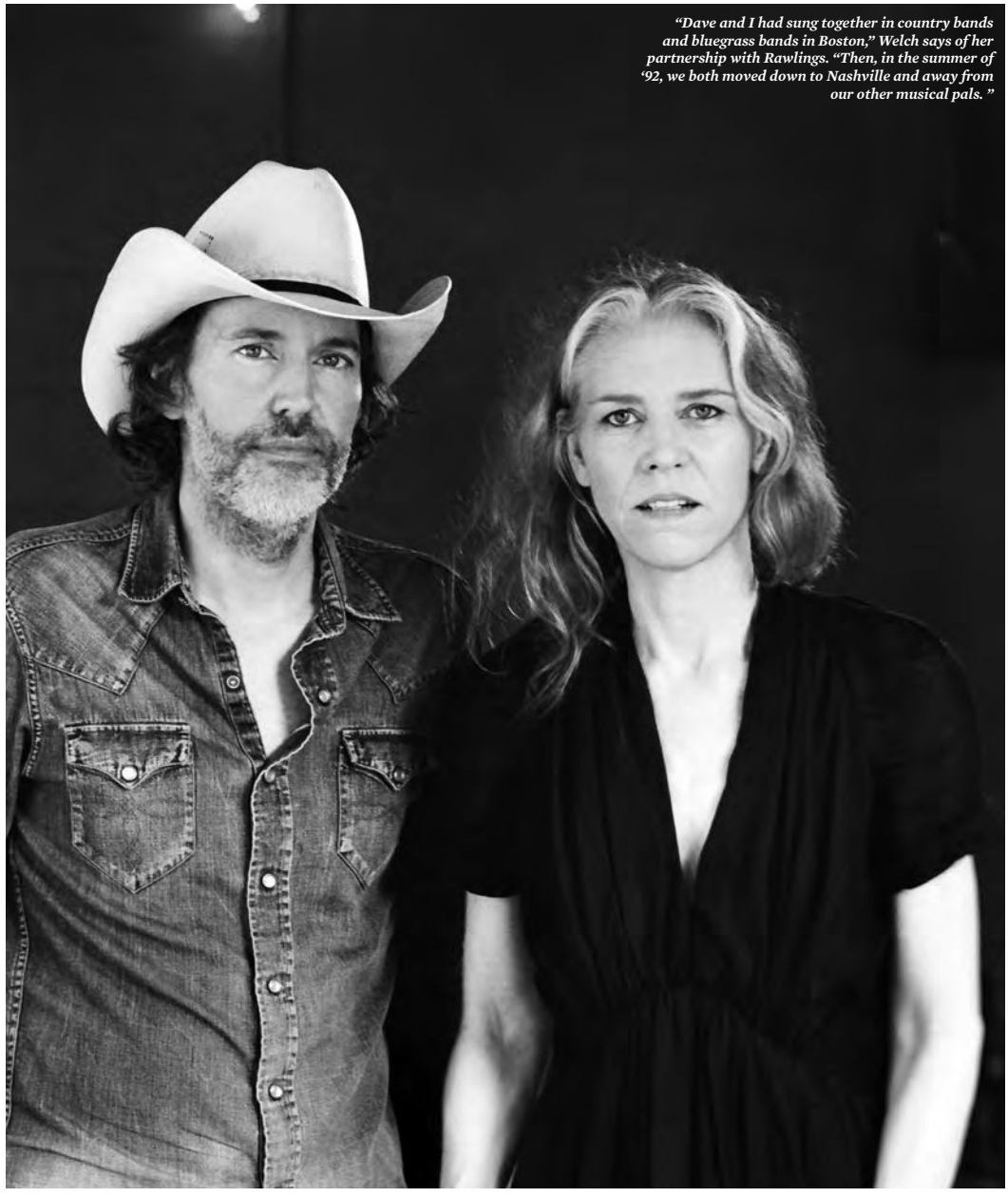
We tried it many, many times. That's what you hear on the bootleg—one version where we were just trying to move it around, make it fresh again

and get an honest performance of it. The track that opens the collection, the trio version of it with me and Dave and T Bone, that's what that was—we were just trying something diffe ent to try to get a good reading out of me. And then the other version of "Orphan Girl" is the home demo, when the song's about a week old. So it's the opposite end of the spectrum. It's like, "Hey, I just wrote this."

Unlike "Orphan Girl," which was well known by the time you entered the studio, the new record also includes "Georgia Road," which you've only performed once. Can you talk about that song?

It was a song that was written just before the sessions. T Bone had heard us play live at the Station Inn and, prior to our fir t session with him, he had asked me for a cassette tape of all my songs. So I got together all the home demos, and Dave and I probably demoed a couple of other things that needed recording, which is what the version of "Acony Bell" [on *Boots No. 1*] would be, a demo just prior to the session where T Bone wanted to hear the songs.

So I sent this tape of about 30 or 35 songs to T Bone, and then we talked about them, and he made his plans for what other musicians we should get after listening to all the stuff. But I guess we finished "Georgia Road" after that tape got sent. I'm pretty sure we wrote it in Nashville because we wrote every song in Nashville. So T Bone had never heard it, and about three-quarters of the way through the LA sessions, Dave and I had a gig. We had booked a gig at McCabe's—I guess we figu ed there'd be time, and there was. So, at this gig, we played



"Dave and I had sung together in country bands and bluegrass bands in Boston," Welch says of her partnership with Rawlings. "Then, in the summer of '92, we both moved down to Nashville and away from our other musical pals."

"I became much more of the singer I am now during those sessions, and I was surprised to find tha I could hear it happen."
GILLIAN WELCH

"Georgia Road." T Bone was there and afterwards he was like, "That's not on the tape. What is that?" So the next day, when we went into the studio, he asked us to play that song. We only played it once because tonally it was a little outside of what we were doing. We were skewing a little more Appalachian than that.

"Red Clay Halo," which appears on *Boots No. 1*, certainly seems like it would have fit on *Revival*. It surfaced later on *Time (The Revelator)*, but what do you remember about the initial decision not to include it?

We thought—and the "we" is we three, the creative brain trust putting *Revival* together, which was me, Dave and T Bone—we all thought that it wasn't quite as strong, sonically. The performance and our arrangement—maybe it wasn't quite as meaningful to us in the duet, and we definitely didn t want to enhance it with a full bluegrass band. And so, if it was just going to be a duet, there were other duet tracks we liked better.

He already knew that *Revival* wouldn't be all duets—although, if you talk to T Bone now, he feels diffe ently about it. I just talked to him the other day about this and he said, "I wish we could have made that whole record just as the duet." But we couldn't. I'm not sure that the record label would have been OK with that. They were nervous about the number of duets we had on there. They told me so. I got nervous phone calls—"We're nervous that people are going to hear these duets and they're just going to turn it off!" I was like, "Well, I don't know what to tell you. That's kind of what we do." [*Laughs.*]

So we knew we had to find a balance of band tracks and duet tracks. That's why "Red Clay Halo" went on the chopping block—because it was a duet track and we were full up. So it got put away for later. But we played it live all those years before we eventually recorded it.

THROUGH THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION

It's often difficult to tell wh e Foxygen's theatrics end and their genre-defining soni - experimentations begin. But one thing's for sure: Sam France and Jonathan Rado sure are keeping us guessing while we try to figu e it out. BY MIKE GREENHAUS

JONATHAN RADO is pretty sure he knows where he left the only copies of Foxygen's early albums—or at least he hopes he can find them. It's an early December afternoon, and the Foxygen multi-instrumentalist is sitting in the sleek Bushwick Airbnb he's renting with his musical partner and frontman Sam France, while in New York preparing to rollout their latest LP for label tastemakers Jagjaguwar, *Hang*. Foxygen have just finished a photoshoot and, in a few hours, they'll preview *Hang*'s tracks at the Brooklyn record store/venue Rough Trade. But, at the moment, the duo are taking their album's title quite literally. They're sipping coffee from a nearby artist-friendly café, noshing on some snacks and tracing their friendship from high-school classmates making music that poked fun at classic-rock tropes, to trying to avoid those very same clichés as they've become not so tongue-in-cheek 21st-century ambassadors of peace and magic.

"It's always been the same dynamic between the two of us," says France, who is outfitted in a tylized vest and jacket, with some nail-polish residue still visible on his fingertip , while discussing the bedroom recordings he made with Rado when they were teenagers.

"We made some great records when we were in high school," adds the more genial and chattier Rado—who is wearing the same brown overcoat he'll sport onstage at Rough Trade a few hours later—emphasizing that, long before they could drive, they were crafting tried-and-true records, not just demos.

"Most of the ones I want to hear, I can't find" France adds. "I think they're on an old computer somewhere."

"I still have the old PC tower—it's in the back of my parents' closest," Rado assures his collaborator. "At least, I *hope* it's in the back of my parents' closet."

Since they burst out of the DIY hipster scene with their Richard Swift-assisted breakthrough *Take the Kids Off Broadway*, it's been difficult t tell where Foxygen's jokes end and their genre-defining soni - experimentations begin and, in certain ways, that was always part of the plan. Their 2013 psychedelic-pop opus *We Are the 21st Century Ambassadors of Peace & Magic*, which was helmed by Swift, did more to bring '60s-inspired stoner sounds back into the general indie-pop consciousness than any album since the 2009 smash by another duo, MGMT.

But, at least according to social media, Foxygen's time in the spotlight has been plagued by inter-band turmoil, debaucherous behavior and a few technical breaks that might actually have been break-ups. And despite its slacker name and whatever knocks remain about rockers invading the classical world, *Hang* is an honest attempt to blend indie hooks and orchestral arrangements. With a tight horn section recreating *Hang*'s strings and France fin -tuning his Iggy Pop-like moves into more nuanced, over-the-top theatrics, as well as a pair of dark sunglasses that would make David Bowie proud, Foxygen's new live band is also perhaps Rado and France's best to date.

"We knew pretty early on what each album would be," Rado says of their surprisingly planned-out trajectory. "We know where we're going because we always think of things as a grand discography and looking at our albums like that really clears things up."

* * *

RADO FIRST MET FRANCE IN math class when they were sixth-grade students in Agoura Hills, Calif., a Los Angeles County city best known in entertainment circles as the breeding ground for nü-metal acts like Linkin Park. At the time, Rado played in the Doors-inspired band The Boscos. "We had a lead singer who thought he was Jim Morrison and wrote lyrics like Jim Morrison, and we covered a lot of Doors songs," Rado says. "Eventually, we kicked that guy out and Sam became the singer of that band. We took these recordings that we had made and Sam did a bunch of overdubs on them. The rest of the band didn't like the overdubs, but I loved them, and we decided to make an 'overdub band.'"

The duo settled on the name Foxygen right off the bat and recorded those seven possibly lost albums before graduating from high school and moving to New York. Rado relocated across the country to study screenwriting at the School of Visual Arts while France was, in his words, "just bouncing around" for a little while, but they spent most of their creative energies recording *Take the Kids Off Broadway* in their Astoria, Queens apartment. In a move seemingly out of a rock-and-roll-inspired SVA film, Rado and France handed their hero Richard Swift a CD-R of the record after a show at Mercury Lounge in 2011. The album already had his fingerprints all over it—in fact, they named the final song on that fi t widespread recording "The Middle School Dance (Song for Richard Swift)."

> "I don't think it ever crossed our minds to do another '60s Kinks record. That's the beauty of being someone like Beck or The Flaming Lips—a one or two person band that can morph styles much more easily because of how a democracy works."
>
> **JOANTHAN RADO**

Swift—who, in addition to his own lo-fi ecordings and work with craftsmen like Damien Jurado, has clocked in time as a member of The Shins, The Arcs and The Black Keys' touring lineup—gave the album a listen and signed on to help the nascent musicians.

"In high school, we were really into experimental music but, when we were in college, we got a little more into songwriting, and we started taking ourselves seriously as a group—just focusing on our craft and production," France says of the songs they were writing at the time. "It was conceptual and we were really influenced y '60s music."

"We write separately and then, we each put our mark on the songs," Rado interjects, demonstrating some of the communitive shorthand that comes from more than a few semesters of playing together. "We each bring a basic song," France replies. "It's just osmosis."

Foxygen gained some traction on the New York art-rock circuit and signed with Jagjaguwar, who rereleased *Take the Kids Off roadway* in 2012. They partnered with Swift once again for their true calling card, *We Are the 21st Century Ambassadors of Peace & Magic*—a tight, trippy riff on the ge of Aquarius' precious sounds and idealistic themes that became a hallmark of this decade's post-jam experimentation. Recorded in a home studio in just a few days, with the three musicians playing a soundscape's worth of instruments, the album walked a fine line bet en serious and self-referential. Even Foxygen's Bandcamp page description danced on that tightrope: "*We Are the 21st Century Ambassadors of Peace & Magic* is a precocious and cocksure joyride across California psychedelia with a burning, bursting punk-rock engine." Lines like, "I left my love in San Francisco/ That's okay, I was bored anyway/ I left my love in the room/ That's okay, I was born in L.A." in "San Francisco" and "There's no need to be an asshole, you're not in Brooklyn anymore" in "No Destruction" clearly were cut straight from Frank Zappa's *Sgt. Pepper* spoof *We're Only in It for the Money*. But, like that classic, Foxygen's breakthrough was just as infectious and carefully constructed enough to send acts ranging from Guster to Marco Benevento to Nathaniel Rateliff in sea ch of that that thoughtful—but never-overthought—Swift sound.

"There's an obvious chemistry between those guys," Swift says. "There's also that silent member, which, in this case, was the producer, but that is definitely their sound. More than anything that I'm proud of—besides the fact that I could actually pull off those drums because their arrangements were so complicated—is that I really discovered them and pushed Jagjaguwar to sign them."

But life started to imitate art on the road. Foxygen put together a live band capable of recreating their studio cuts but also earned a reputation for their brash, unreliable shows, where it was never quite clear whether they were mocking arena-rock excesses or reveling in them. At several early gigs, including a high-profile XSW showcase, France was visibly hostile to his audience and, another time, they cancelled their European tour in order to maintain "the creative health of the band." Then, on the road in July 2013, France sustained complete fractures

Sonic Siblings: France and Rado (l-r).

of the tibia and fibula that were severe enough to require surgery, forcing the group to cancel more shows. Around the same time, his girlfriend, touring member Elizabeth Fey, put up a blog post exposing a diffe ent type of fracture in France and Rado's friendship. Rado released a solo record on Woodsist, the psych-friendly indie incubator founded by Woods' Jeremy Earl. (He recorded the material on an eight-track and signed on a handshake deal.) Many wondered if Foxygen would fall victim to the same unruly behavior that ultimately caused the demise of their early influence im Morrison.

"I think it's a little bit of both, like a lot of things we do," Rado says when asked whether those early antics were part of a performance-art piece or a sign of things actually becoming unhinged. "Part of that was just not being able to play music and just working within our inabilities."

France agrees, noting, "We are really just big fans of the mythological aspects of rock-and-roll, aside from just the musicality and the record making process of it. We think of records as little art pieces, like most people do, but we like observing it from a standpoint that's a little more self aware than some other bands."

Rado and France bounced back from the drama and retreated to their home studio, as well as various destinations like Chateau Marmont and the Beverly Hills Hotel, to record an even headier concept piece, 2014's *...And Star Power*—a 24-track double-disc album that embraces its grandeur and tells the story of the fictional band Star Power. Despite coming off of a gen e-defining record, the core Foxygen duo decided to tweak their formula, mixing live performances and studio wizardry and inviting a festival's worth of fellow psych-freaks to make cameos, including members of The Flaming Lips, of Montreal and White Fence. They even toyed with the idea of releasing the album under the Star Power pseudonym, though they eventually decided to share the billing with their alter-egos.

"I don't think it ever crossed our minds to do another '60s Kinks record," Rado says with a laugh. "That's the beauty of being someone like Beck or The Flaming Lips—a one or two person band that can morph styles much more easily because of how a democracy works. It's not like we have a drummer saying, "I don't want to do this."

France sees a clear through line connecting the characters on their two proper full-lengths. "It made sense for that to be the natural progression, even from a career standpoint," he says. "It was all meta and mixed together, but that's where those [*21st Century*] guys would have been in 1972, or a few years later, when they were rock stars with a little too much money. That was an archetype that we wanted to play around with, so it just made sense for it to be the second album."

"They had a very successful fir t record and spent too much time working on the second one," Rado interjects.

...And Star Power starts off, sonically, where its predecessor leaves off, with the groovy "How Can You Really." But then it consciously moves deeper into Rado and France's—or maybe Star Power's—record crates to weave in elements of punk, prog, psych and pop, as well as nods to Dylan, Fleetwood Mac, Todd Rundgren and maybe even Foxygen themselves. Tracks like the meditative "Coulda Been My Love," the folk ramble "You & I" and the garage jam "Cold Winter/ Freedom" proved that Foxygen hadn't lost their creative chops, and they managed to hold it together during their support tour. But once again, things got loopy when France and Rado announced a "farewell tour" for Star Power in 2015 that fans and critics alike saw as Foxygen's own breakup. Adding to the confusion, the members of the group seemed to fade into the Internet, except for live drummer Shaun Fleming, who released the soul-psych favorite *Everybody's a Good Dog* under the name Diane Coffee later that ear.

"It was a farewell to the Star Power concept," Rado says with a mischievous grin. "We made a little poster and it said, 'Star Power Farewell Tour.' It didn't actually say Foxygen anywhere on the announcement. We never said Foxygen was breaking up—ever. People take Twitter very seriously."

* * *

FOXYGEN STARTED WORKING on *Hang* in 2015, about a month after wrapping up the promo tour for *...And Star Power*, but the album's lofty concept dates back even farther.

"We knew a long time ago, probably around the *We Are the 21st Century Ambassadors of Peace & Magic* album, that we wanted to do an orchestral record," Rado admits. "We knew that it would happen after *...And Star Power*, which was also a concept that we had very early on. Then, sometime while we were recording *Star Power*, I sketched out the basic songs one night for 'Follow the Leader,' 'Avalon,' 'Mrs. Adams,' 'America' and 'Rise Up' all in one sitting." (*...And Star Power*'s track listing

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THE SPIRIT CONNECTION

While mourning the passing of his longtime mentor, Amos Lee steps behind the boards for the fir t time—and offers his mo t collaborative album yet. **BY MATT INMAN**

"IT WASN'T REALLY about the control for me," Amos Lee says in reference to the recording process for his newest release, *Spirit*, the singer's sixth overall album and the fir t that he's produced himself. While some songwriters might take that opportunity to exert dominance over the studio, Lee was determined to focus on being a conduit for talent and passion, surrounding himself and his music with partners who would do their best to improve each song.

"It was more about being a person who could bring people together and connect the people that I wanted to work with," says Lee, who considered a number of producers before making the decision to take the reins himself. "I've made a bunch of records, and I wanted to try to

Michael Lavine

be the connecting force of the project—not only as the artist, but also as the person who is hiring the musicians and doing some of the arrangements, and having that quality relationship with everyone in the room. And I really enjoyed it."

Lee's yearning to surround himself with talented people and act as the glue that holds it all together is nothing new, and he attributes some of that drive—and much of his success in general—to one man in particular. Early on, he found himself under the wing of Bruce Lundvall, the legendary record executive who served as president and CEO of Blue Note Records, the company he brought back from the dead and to which he signed previously undiscovered acts like Norah Jones and Lee (who released his fir t fi e records on the label).

"Bruce was the guy," Lee says. "He was like a father, a grandfather, a buddy, a mentor—there are a lot of relationships that I had with him, and all of his artists felt that. He was the kind of person that you wanted not only to sit down and talk music with, but also to have a meal with. Bruce was about his artists. He had great business relationships, but when you sat down with Bruce, you always had the feeling that he was coming at it with purity and as a music lover. He was a jazz fan—Dexter Gordon was his favorite."

After a long career in the record business that included a 20-year stint heading up Blue Note, Lundvall passed away in May 2015 after a battle with Parkinson's disease.

"He was just a wonderful guy, a beautiful man, and I miss him a lot," Lee says. "I'll never have that relationship ever again, I don't think."

Lee fir t came into contact with Lundvall during a residency in his hometown of Philadelphia, where he played steady gigs at a small club called The Fire early on in his career. Lundvall, ever on the lookout for new acts, visited the venue and sat down with Lee and A&R man Eli Wolf.

"There were lots of rock shows there; it wasn't always the cleanest place," Lee recalls. "And if you ever knew Bruce, he was the most dapper dude—always dressed in beautiful suits, always Italian shoes. He was just old-school. But he was never afraid to go into a small club and go upstairs with a bunch of your stinky-ass friends and have a beer in a can, and that's what he did. He came up, and we were all these dirty kids upstairs in this club, and he just sat down on the couch, popped a Schlitz and drank."

Besides his music fandom and easygoing demeanor, Lundvall was revered for his treatment of young musicians, whom he approached not as a boss but as a partner—someone who was motivated to help artists pursue the life they wanted in the business. "I was a baby coming in and he was just so calm and so gentle," Lee says. "The beautiful thing is, their mission for me was always: 'What do you want to do? How do you see your career? What do you envision for yourself?' I want to make my music as lasting as possible. I don't want to make a record, have a hit and then [stop]. I want my songs to be in people's

lives. The people who raised me through their songs, I am forever indebted to. And that's how Bruce approached his art. It was like, 'How can we make a career for you?' That's been my mission ever since."

In October 2015, Lee took part in a memorial concert for Lundvall—a lightly publicized affair that featu ed an array of jazz masters and artists close with the beloved man, including Jones, Robert Glasper, John Scofield and Ravi Coltrane.

"It's amazing, man," Lee says, reflecting back on the event. "All these artists from all walks and all diffe ent genres were there, and all of his old business partners, and everybody was there with love—and that's what he was. He was a connector. He was like a gigantic, warm, glowing light that brought people together. My music was a part of that story, and his soul will always be a part of my music because of that."

Looking forward after the loss of such a father figu e, Lee aims to embody Lundvall's inspiration in his own efforts bringing people together to continue the late executive's lasting dream of always ushering more music into the world. "It was a big loss for us, but my idea is always to keep singing my songs," Lee says. "I think about Bruce a lot when I think about what music I'm going to make. I think, 'What would Bruce say?' And Bruce would just say, 'Sing your song. You can't join the throne until you sing your own song.' He was just a great cat, man, and I give him credit for maintaining his vision all those years and staying so committed to his artists. Those were real, lasting relationships."

* * *

WHEN IT CAME TIME TO MAKE his sixth album, Lee and his people knew that a relationship like they had with Lundvall was most likely not going to come out of a new label, but the place where Lee landed ended up being a surprisingly good fit. ohn Varvatos is most well-known for his work in the fashion industry—while he was with Calvin Klein in the '90s, he helped invent and popularize the boxer brief—including his own eponymous company, which teamed with Republic Records in 2014 to form John Varvatos Records. The company's fir t big-name signing was Zac Brown Band, and Lee wasn't far behind.

"I was presented with the opportunity because I know the Zac Brown guys pretty well and knew that they were making a record on John's label," Lee says. "When it came time for us to find a new hom , [Varvatos] seemed like a good partner because he's a music lover." [Lee contributed to ZBB's Grammy-winning 2012 album, *Uncaged*.] One of the stores for Varvatos' brand is even located at 315 Bowery in New York City, the old locale of legendary club CBGB, where Varvatos made sure to preserve some choice aspects of the punk ambience, like the bathroom graffiti

Lee says that he and Varvatos only really talked about the album after it was recorded, and their label/artist relationship, while not the caliber of what he had with Lundvall, is off to a solid start. "The cool thing about working with him is he's just a very passionate dude about everything he does," Lee continues. "He's a very inspiring guy in that his energy is so positive. They were really supportive from an artistic standpoint—not at all overbearing or pushy or opinionated in ways that didn't resonate with me. They were very trusting and open with me as far as that goes. I always take that spirit of the blues with me, and as long as I'm working with good people who care about music, I'm happy."

> "I think it comes down to the connection. It's about being able to communicate your vision with people and giving them a palette to work with, a landscape to build homes on."
> AMOS LEE

Although *Spirit* is Lee's fir t time producing on his own, he's learned the craft from some very capable teachers. "I look back on every producer I've had, and everybody was awesome to work with," says Lee, whose last two albums, 2011's *Mission Bell* and 2013's *Mountains of Sorrow, Rivers of Song* were produced by Joey Burns of Calexico and Jay Joyce, respectively. "Jay, for instance, is such a talented guy. There were a couple of songs on *Mountains of Sorrow* where we would play these small parts and have no idea what was going to happen to them, and then, the next day, we would come in and Jay would play them for us, and we're like, 'Wow.' That's a classic idea of what arrangement is about."

All of the producers Lee has worked with have also been musicians, something that he says helped both with those records and with his own endeavor in sitting at the helm for *Spirit* and becoming a musician/producer in his own right.

"The thing I've learned from all my producers is how you can create an environment," Lee says. "It's hard to create an environment that's musical and open creatively, but also focused."

And while many musicians—especially those acting as producers for the fir t time—might lean on tried-and-true friends and known collaborators, some of the people Lee brought on for the project were completely new faces, including the rhythm section of bassist Adam Blackstone and drummer Mark Colenburg. "I had never played with either of those guys before, and they had never played with each other," Lee says. "But I just had a feeling that it would be really cool—I mean, they're both spectacularly talented—and it was.

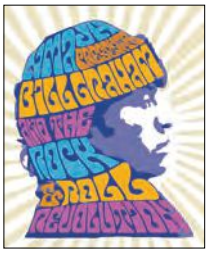
"It comes down to the connection," he continues. "It's about being able to communicate your vision with people and giving them a palette to work with, a landscape to build homes on. To be a great producer, you have to give people the opportunity to open themselves up to being creative as well. I always want people's input, honestly. I want them to feel connected to the process. I wouldn't want to go into any creative or musical environment where it was fleshed out, 100 pe cent perfect. I don't want it to be like, 'OK, play this: *doo dee doo.*' They play it—'Cool, can I get paid now?' But it depends on the project. If you have a super strong vision and it works beautifully, then I say go for it and do your thing—but I'm not Brian Wilson. When you have that kind of vision, that incredible musical intuition, then you use it, but otherwise, it's mostly about putting people together in a room and playing music."

The vision is clearly there, however. For six albums now, Lee has managed to create lush landscapes of folk-infused neo-soul with various producers, so taking over was the logical next step, even with the possibility of failure. Lee isn't concerned with the short-term; he's in this for the long haul. The soul of the music is in him, and that's not going anywhere.

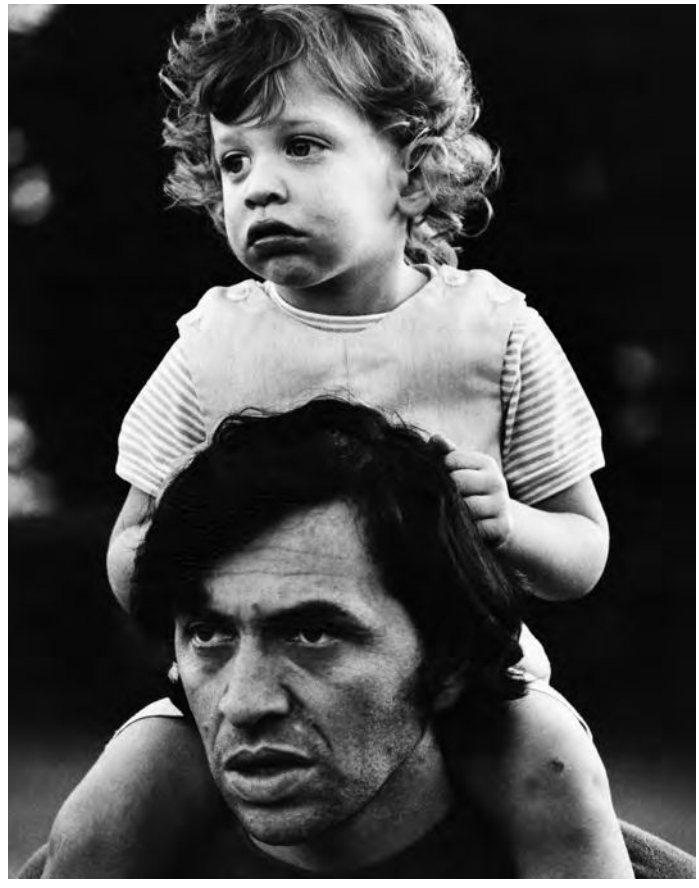
"This was about taking a chance and giving myself another way to grow as a musician," Lee explains. "Because I have no formal training—I just play and learn how to play. I always give people this message: Take a chance on yourself. Give it a shot. Don't be afraid. In music, especially, what's the worst that will happen? People will hate it? OK, fin . No one's going to get hurt. But don't go to bed every night like, 'What if?' There's a million turns and opportunities that you can pick during your daily life to go, 'Well, I could've done this—' Forget that. Take a chance on yourself and commit to it. And if you commit to it and it feels right to you, then the outcome is always going to be what it's supposed to be."

EXHIBITING THE BILL GRAHAM REVOLUTION

The legendary concert promoter's sons take *Relix* on a visual tour of his long, strange trip from escaping the Nazis to handing out thousands of joints on New Year's Eve. BY DEAN BUDNICK



"BILL GRAHAM and the Rock & Roll Revolution" is a true labor of love. The exhibition tracks the extraordinary life and legacy of the renowned rock impresario—from his arrival in the United States as a 10-year-old Jewish immigrant fleeing the Nazis through his work with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, the founding of his Fillmore venues, his charitable endeavors and his close relationships with artists such as the Grateful Dead, The Rolling Stones, Janis Joplin, Carlos Santana and The Who. The show incorporates concert posters and rock memorabilia, along with photos, films and other archival items that assist in telling the captivating story of the fabled concert promoter. While the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles originally organized the exhibit—in January, it will complete a run at Philadelphia's National Museum of American Jewish History. The impetus came from Graham's two sons, David and Alex, who had been thinking about the proper way to memorialize their father, who passed away at age 60 in 1991 in a helicopter crash.



DAVID: *I don't know where [that photo is] from, but it's around the time Dad was closing the Fillmore. What it reminds me of is the movie of the Fillmore closing* [Last Days of the Fillmore]. *There's a lot of clips of my dad and I hanging out in the park and he's talking about why he's retiring, and he's alluding to the fact that he has a young family and I'm running around. For me, it's emotional and evocative because I'm really young and here's my dad being young and robust, talking about wanting to live his life with his family.*

It reminds me of that time period when he found so much great success. He had a really unique life. He went from not even knowing what rock-and-roll was to being the godfather of the scene only three or four years later. That picture of me on his shoulders just represents that time period and how much great stuff was going on and, personally, how much difficulty was also going on—it wa 't all bread and roses.

DAVID: *First of all, [Bob] Dylan is a very nice guy, and I almost feel sorry for him because he's been an iconic figu e for 50 years now. But he was a nice man and he had a real affection for my dad. e asked Dad to do his tour in '74 with The Band, and there's a great story about how Dylan only wanted to do 12 shows, but when my dad was done with him they had like 45 shows scheduled. That was a big deal because back in the '70s, these big national tours were new. He also did Dylan's '84 tour through Europe. They had a really good relationship.*

I was very young when these things happened, so there was no suspicion of me. I was just a kid, so someone like Bob would be very friendly because I wasn't trying to get anything from him, and I could tell that he liked my dad a lot.

What are the origins of the exhibition?

ALEX GRAHAM: My brother and I have been working on this project for about four or fi e years. After our dad died, his office in an Francisco was like a museum, in the sense that it reflected the 2 -year history of Bill Graham Presents. He also had his own archive that he kept at his home in Mill Valley, but there was a lot of stuff a the company. So, although the company changed hands over the years, my brother and I had a long-standing agreement with the company that everything on the walls of the office ould remain there unless they were to vacate the building, which is what happened at the end of 2008.

So I went out there and spent several days basically working with my dad's archivist, James Olness, and we packed up a museum's worth of archival items such as photos, memorabilia and posters. I set up a warehouse in San Francisco and started flyin out there regularly for the next couple of years, building a database and restoring a lot of things. Having James help me was invaluable because he's sort of an encyclopedia of what everything is, where it came from, who the photographer was, etc.

James, my brother David and I eventually decided that we didn't want to just keep it to ourselves. Dad never viewed these materials as a commodity; it's not something he ever thought to sell. So, along with some other people in the foundation, which we set up after Dad's death—the Bill Graham Foundation—we came up with the idea to put together a small sort of retrospective on his life.

DAVID: *My dad was the tour director on the '81 Stones tour—that frankly rejuvenated their career, if you really analyze it—and on that tour, Keith had a pair of boots that he was in love with. He would never play without these boots and, in San Francisco, at a show at Candlestick Park, his heel broke off on one of the shoes. Emblematic of how hands-on my dad was, he grabbed these boots and he personally took it upon himself to fix them, and my dad was the fu thest from a fi -it guy or a carpenter. So here's my dad tracking down a hammer and a nail and hammering the heel back into this boot and giving it back to him so he can play.*

At the end of the tour, Keith gave him the shoes back as a gesture of love. That's the type of stuff my dad would d . I think there's a scene in the Fillmore movie where he's trying to fix erry's guitar when it broke. My dad was the least technical person you could find, but tha 's the kind of person he was; he was so on top of everything and took each thing very personally. He also wanted to take personal care of the people he hired and the people he invited into his concerts.

Alex and David Graham at the exhibit honoring their father.

There was someone on the board who had a relationship with a place called the Lush Life Gallery. It's this gallery that's only about 1,000 feet, but it's right around the corner from the Fillmore and it's also a part of the Jazz Heritage Center. So, along with my brother, James and some of the people in the foundation, we took all these items, along with some other things that David and I had at our homes, and created a story about our dad's life called "Presenting Bill Graham."

We had this really cool idea to use Bob Greenfield s book [Graham's autobiography, co-written with Greenfield *Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock and Out*], so that the captioning, whenever possible, would be in the fir t person. So if you were looking at a picture of Dad up in the Catskills, working as a waiter shortly after the Korean War, there would be a passage in the book where he might talk about an experience, such as running dice games late at night, after dinner had been served, which made it so much more intimate.

It was very successful in terms of the emotional connection we wanted it to have, and a lot of people came out of the woodwork to see it. One of those people was a guy named Bob Kirschner, who is the director of the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles. He said, "This is a phenomenal show. I assume that you have a lot more content than you were able to put on the walls?" We told him: "Yes, of course." And he basically said, "I'd love to talk to you about bringing it to Los Angeles and creating a full-blown museum exhibition." We just thought that sounded great.

How is your father's life organized and presented?

ALEX: It's a timeline; it's constructed in a linear way. It begins in 1931 when Dad was born in Berlin as a Russian Jew. A few years later when it was

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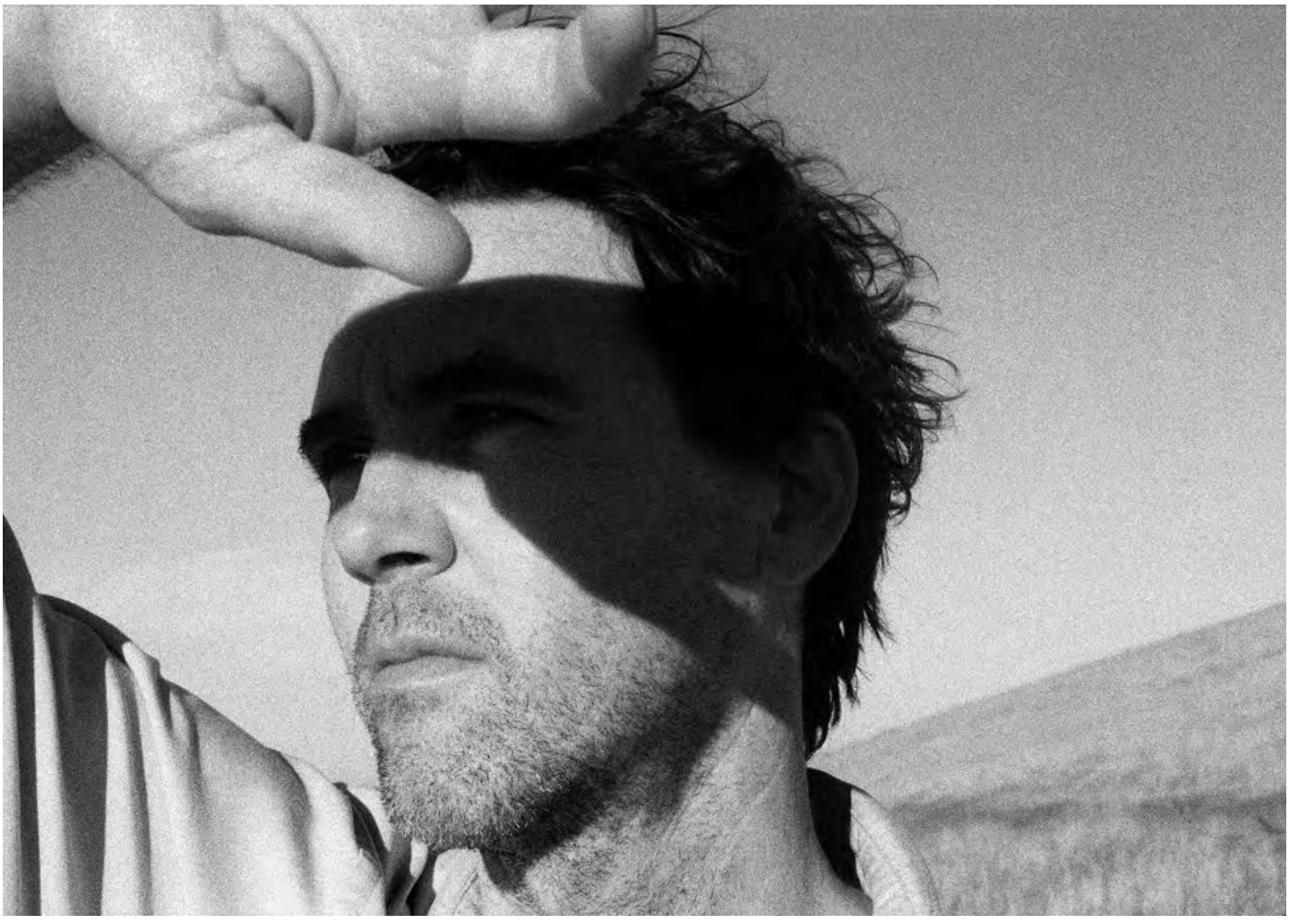
DAVID: *New Year's Eve was always the best moment of the year. It was his shining moment and crowning achievement. Every year, he played Father Time, and he would bring the New Year in with some kind of themed theatrical production. As you see, one year, he came in on a mushroom; one year, he came as an eagle and hatched the babies coming out of the eggs; another year, there was a huge bridge that went across the floo . There was always a really fun interplay between him and the Dead, who had heard what he was going to do but were very protective of their own space.*

Dad always had huge bags of balloons that came down at midnight, and Dad pissed them off y putting the balloons right over the stage. They always requested that he didn't, and he would always put two big sacks right above the stage. It was always the highest moment of the year, and I mean that both ways. It was always the most joyous of the year; everybody was on the same wavelength.

Of all the great shows I've been to with Dad, the closing of the Winterland has always been my favorite concert experience, and I was only 10 years old. It was such an epic and emotional thing. It was a five day run. All the Deadheads were lined up for New Year's Eve after the show on the 30th, so there was a line around the Winterland overnight the night before New Year's [Eve], and we served carrot cake and soup on the corner at like 5 a.m. Then, the Deadheads were let in during the early afternoon to watch Animal House*, and then The Blues Brothers played, so John Belushi was onstage in front of you. Finally, the Dead played all night and we served breakfast in the morning. Probably my favorite part of the whole evening was that they pre-rolled about 5,000-10,000 joints and gave them out to the audience as part of the experience, and told the cops they were doing it beforehand. That's the stuff that just does 't happen anymore.*



Rachel Pony Cassells

MANGY LOVE SONGS

Cass McCombs has emerged as one of the most gifted singer-songwriters of his generation, but that's not the only interesting part of his story. BY BENJY EISEN

"THERE'S SO much research to be done on people's actual work that, sometimes, I'm distracted by their biography," Cass McCombs tells me, as we take our seats in the bar of a private club in downtown San Francisco. I can't help but wonder if he means that as an anecdote or more of a warning: "Don't write my bio. Anyone can find that out on th Internet. Write about what's interesting instead." That was already my intent, so it's off t a good start.

And, yeah, look, if you want to know Cass McCombs' timeline and statistical data, then I suggest a quick glance at his Wikipedia page: "Born Nov. 13, 1977 in Concord, Calif.; released his fir t EP in 2002; toured with Arcade Fire, Band of Horses, War on Drugs; genres: rock, folk, psychedelic, punk, alt-country." But for those already familiar with him as an artist, reading the bio can make you feel like you're Capt. Willard reading Col. Kurtz's dossier on his way up river. If musicians were an army, then Cass would be plenty well decorated, but for the social media generation, where history no longer matters, neither does that.

So, then, this is not a Cass McCombs bio. We don't have time for that distraction. This is a conversation with the artist, conducted over one too many glasses of wine, from the cozy confines of an elit private urban country club where tech secrets are traded and power deals are made with a handshake and, perhaps, another round. Little wonder, then, that we talk less about the album—or, for that matter, his music specificall —and more about art in the abstract, set against a backdrop of "life, the universe, everything."

The club is called The Battery and, at fir t brush, it might seem like one of those privileged places that a "people's artist," such as Cass, could have their share of hesitations about. The Battery certainly tailors to a very select—and, for the most part, admirable—crowd. It counts, as card-carrying members, no shortage of techies, entertainment lawyers, liberal-leaning politicians, investment capitalists, trust-fund grown-ups and Wild West entrepreneurs. The club does not represent one ideology, nor does it push any agenda. Instead, it actively supports, encourages and fosters a sense of community. That is, the community within and the community without. Its members are generally aware that they are part of an elite, and they are glad to mix among such like-minded company; but they also are generally aware that with their money and

influence comes esponsibility to the greater good. They are asked, here, to become leaders, examples, role models—and, above all, to be cognizant, aware and engaged.

It's what we, as a culture, ask of our artists. Little wonder then that The Battery opens its doors (and arms) to artists of all types, aware that it is the creatives—the Cass McCombs of the world—who fir t give voice and context to communities and, within those communities, movements, mobilization and, ultimately, action networks. All of which could form fl w charts that would somehow look familiar to Cass, even if they were found crumpled up in his waste bin.

Look: Cass McCombs is complicated. He's not a contradiction; he's just complicated. He gives the impression that he's never been fully pleased by anything ever written about him, yet he agreed to do the interview, although his management said that this might be the last interview he gives for a while.

Listen: Cass will likely fin some amount of disgust in any analysis either because he doesn't identify with the depiction, or because he *does* but doesn't want to admit it, almost like hearing yourself talk on tape for the fir t time. But in these dark and uncertain times, we need him more than ever. He's the type of artist that conscientious citizens could really lean on, looking for clues to something, but what exactly, who's to say: We don't know what, and Cass probably doesn't either. He's looking with us. It's his art, like all art, that whispers the clues. Maybe what we're looking for is permission. Permission from an artist (who claims no other authority) to be furious with the government, furious with politicians and reality TV stars alike...Permission to engage in the oncoming era of political unrest and permission to disengage from it entirely. As he sings on the opening song to his new album, *Mangy Love*, "And eulogies poured from the stage/ but nothing changed." (The double-take moment comes a couple verses later, when he sings: "Sent a letter to my congressman/ the Ku Klux Klan/ from my pierced hands/ bum bum bum/ They sent me back an Apple phone/ a fin - hair comb/ and a bell tolled/ bum bum bum.")

But Cass is right in that it's hard to cast him as a typical artist, and doing so would be a great disservice to his work. An easy example would be to point to his website—the obvious place for commerce and accessibility. Most artists would want their online portal to have content relating to their latest products, complete with purchase links, an online store, photos, favorable press clips and a current bio. Cass's website has none of that. Instead, it offers a f ee download of an original font ("Die Sect") that he and his friends came up with, for fun, by dismantling and altering the peace sign. Instead of an "About" section, there's a seemingly outdated "This Site's History" page. There are lyrics, but none from *Mangy Love*. There's a "Video" section, featuring just one brilliant video, for "Laughter Is the Best Medicine"—certainly one of the highlights from the new album. But in order to view the other new videos, you have to search for them on Vimeo.

"Laughter Is the Best Medicine," by itself, would likely appear on a Pandora station for Super Furry Animals. The video is barely abstract, certainly confusing, but undeniably compelling, much like the song and the artist behind it. In fact, it's eye candy for ear candy. Of course, Cass himself will likely wince when he reads that sentence.

Dig a little bit deeper, though, and perhaps the video is meant as a metaphor for the song's lyrical content. It pairs lazy landscape scenes with politically charged images, but one is never quite sure of the intent or agenda. There's a protest of some sort, the remnants of a Bernie Sanders rally, a parody of the HRC campaign with the hashtag #freechelseamanning and—perhaps most important—a cat licking itself in its forbidden parts, bookending the whole thing. Cass sings, "Sugar and spice and everything weird." It seems like the message, if there is one, is that the revolution—and revolution—can go be and do whatever, off in th distance, and as the images flash ac oss our television sets and mobile devices, we'll make jokes and keep each other laughing at cat porn while Rome goes down in flame . And it's all on equal ground. I like that interpretation. But is that what's really going on here? Again, who's to say?

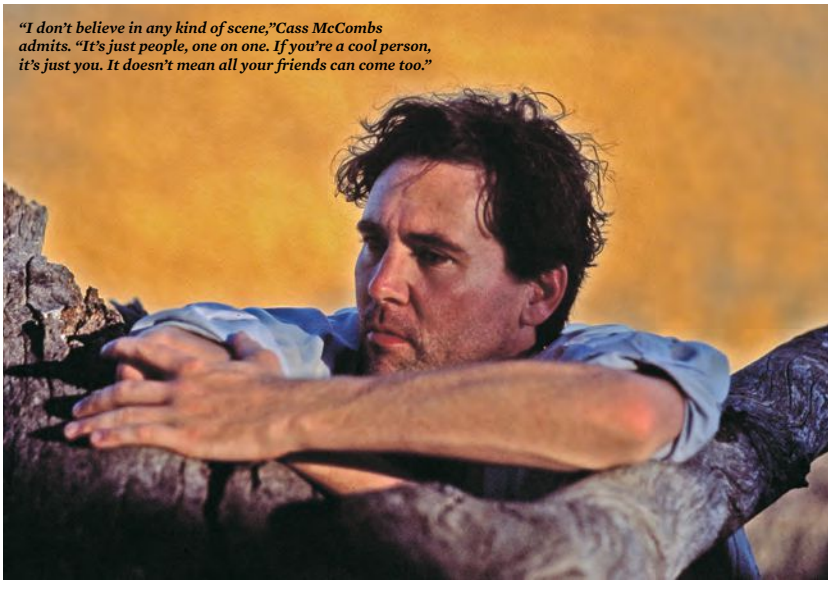
Cass should know, so I text him. I did this just now, in real time, while writing about it, and relayed my interpretation, asking almost apologetically if I missed the mark. "That's hilarious," he writes back, almost immediately. "Hadn't thought about that, but I dig it." Naturally, he doesn't offer a alternative explanation. I don't follow up.

Instead, I recall something he said during our meeting at The Battery: "I think I believe in a world that defie , and is beyond, description. So when I'm writing, I'm asking myself: 'What's a song I haven't written yet?' I've written about this, I've written about that, but it's a pretty big universe, so what haven't I talked about yet? Maybe even something that's slightly contradictory to something else I've firml held on to as a belief—let's challenge that. Let's fuck with my own beliefs."

I suppose that's how a song like "Rancid Girl" makes it from the notepad to the final t acklist on the album. Featuring an intro by Phish's Mike Gordon (on guitar and vocals—not bass) the song is an unusual sort-of nightmare love song to an unworthy heroine from a man who expects to kill himself before long. ("You're a rancid girl/ in a rancid world/ but I don't mind.")

I wonder how I can relate to such an undeniably catchy song. I am reminded, then, of something Cass said while we were waiting on the waitress. After conceding that many of his songs are written from the perspective of other people, real or imagined, and from all diffe ent walks of life, he pauses to think for a moment, then postulates, "Naturally, they will appear on the surface as being contradictory, but these are just surface things like politics, gender, race—things like that. I view those as surface things. There's something more universal that we all have in common that's more hidden."

If Cass can reveal the hidden commonalities, under the



"I don't believe in any kind of scene,"Cass McCombs admits. "It's just people, one on one. If you're a cool person, it's just you. It doesn't mean all your friends can come too."

surface of the quagmire that we all wade in, then he will be as important as I think he is during this dangerously dividing time in our nation's history. But Cass probably doesn't want to feel the weight of that responsibility, which might be why some of his work is just outsider and unusual for the sake of being outsider and unusual. It doesn't always have to mean something to matter. ("It can be funny and devastating at the same time," he says). Plus, there's something undeniably charming about the fact that a couple years ago, Cass wrote a song directly inspired by a quirky jingle that Mike Gordon wrote—*almost* as a joke—about his mom ("Minkin") for Phish's 1986 hand-dubbed cassette, *The White Tape*.

He fir t met Mike in 2012 when they both played at Bob Weir's "Move Me Brightly" Jerry Garcia tribute and he's appeared on every one of Cass' subsequent albums: 2013's *Big Wheel and Others*, the 2015 compilation *A Folk Set Apart* and *Mangy Love*. *Mangy Love* also features an incredible list of contributions from sonic innovators and improvisers, including Joe Russo, Blake Mills, Farmer Dave Scher and Stuart Bogie.

Yes, that's right. Cass is influenced y Phish and the Grateful Dead. "I saw Jerry play many times," he says. "I was there, front row. I felt it in a heavy, heavy way. We don't have to talk about it."

An hour later, when trying to make a point about something else entirely, I let slip my own affection for Phish "They're great," he interjects, immediately, eyes lighting up. "I can talk about Phish. I don't really want to, but I can." (He started seeing them live in 1993 and says he's "been picking away at their tunes" ever since.)

I understand Cass's hesitancy to talk about two distinct bands that have a massive audience and, hence, a ton of musicians trying to ride their coattails. Cass isn't trying to cash in on that wave—the thought of it alone is repelling. Also, there's a formidable stigma around both their respective scenes that seems to affect the other arti ts that dabble professionally in their worlds. I tell him this.

"I don't believe in any kind of scene," he counters. "It's just people, one on one. If you're a cool person, it's just you. It doesn't mean all your friends can come too. Growing up in the '90s, we had MTV, and I hated MTV. We had so much venom toward the mainstream. That's partly why we went off to the Dead, who were still active. I was into Nirvana, and I remember when Kurt Cobain wore that 'Kill the Grateful Dead' shirt. I remember that. But growing up in that time, everyone I knew was completely aware of how the media and businesses wanted to manipulate us—people between the ages of 14 and 17. They wanted to get us to believe in 'alternative music,' and we're like, 'Ain't going to happen, guys. We're ahead of you on this, and we're way too savvy.'"

For all his entanglement with bands that would be considered "indie"—My Morning Jacket, Modest Mouse, The Shins—Cass has recently been hand-picked by the Grateful Dead's Phil Lesh to perform with him in several all-star lineups, and Lesh's ex-bandmate Weir even covered one of his songs (with members of The National).

"The thing about it is that you don't want to hide behind riff ," he says, of playing with members of the Dead. "Improvisation is easy if you can just fall back on those well-rehearsed idioms that you've done over a million times, so it's not really improvising—you're connecting little Lincoln Logs or something.

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KINGS OF LEON • USHER & THE ROOTS • BASSNECTAR • THE LUMINEERS • FLUME • WIZ KHALIFA
PRETTY LIGHTS • SOLANGE • RAE SREMMURD • YOUNG THE GIANT • PORTER ROBINSON (LIVE)
ANDERSON .PAAK & THE FREE NATIONALS • GRIZ • COLD WAR KIDS • BLOOD ORANGE • MIKE POSNER
BLEACHERS • SOJA • THE REVIVALISTS • SNAILS • D.R.A.M. • MAC DEMARCO • WAKA FLOCKA FLAME • SLEIGH BELLS
GALLANT • SNAKEHIPS • LOUIS THE CHILD • THE GROWLERS • MOON TAXI • THE KNOCKS (LIVE) • RUSS • JOEY PURP
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ALLEN STONE • GEORGE CLINTON AND PARLIAMENT FUNKADELIC • FKJ • GALACTIC • THE JAPANESE HOUSE
LEWIS DEL MAR • BIPOLAR SUNSHINE • TENNYSON • JACOB COLLIER • HAYWYRE • WHETHAN
LOUIS FUTON • OKEECHOBEE GOSPEL SOUL EXPERIENCE: BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA, ALLEN STONE & MORE
KHRUANGBIN • CON BRIO • NIGHTMARES ON WAX (DJ SET) • OTT • PVSL • KAIYDO • FUTUREBIRDS
RAINBOW KITTEN SURPRISE • JACOB BANKS • TAUK • RYAN ELLIOTT • PERPETUAL GROOVE • ROB GARZA (DJ SET)
ESCORT (DJ SET) • JACUZZI BOYS • CEREUS BRIGHT • MERCHANDISE • VHS COLLECTION • DONNA MISSAL
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PHONETICALLY VIVID PHRASES

The Flaming Lips close their "wild trilogy" with a synthetic odyssey inspired by a Polish tome and Miley Cyrus. BY RYAN REED

THE FLAMING Lips have crafted unhinged psych-rock epics about giraffe , lush electro-pop anthems about robotic battles and jokey folk ditties about fibe optic Jesuses. They've sculpted headphone majesty using technology, both vintage (traditional rock gear) and modern (Pro Tools, computer programming). And they've issued their work on formats like vinyl, gummy fetuses, multiple CDs intended to be played simultaneously and hard drives encased in human skulls. For Wayne Coyne, the Oklahoma City band's co-founder, frontman and lyrical visionary, each project needs an artistic center—a predominant instrument or lyrical theme to spark their imagination and further their evolution.

"I can almost tell you, record by record, what new instrument we got and why it made us say, 'We need to make music this way,'" he says. "Sean Lennon gave us this little, plastic vintage synthesizer. We kept making music on this thing, and that ended up becoming [2013's] *The Terror*. For a little while, we couldn't make a song without using this fucking thing. We were just addicted to it. The sound of it made us make music a certain way."

With the Lips' 15th officia LP, the mind-altering *Oczy Mlody*, the band burrowed even deeper into the synthetic realm. While they've never operated as a "traditional" rock band in any sense, and though they've been experimenting with synths and electronics since the late-'90s, their new songs are *defined* by these elements—from the auto-tuned, industrial grind of "Do Glowy" to the shimmering title-track, an instrumental that conjures Tangerine Dream producing Rihanna. With its pummeling sub-bass and eerie keyboard drones, *Oczy Mlody* feels as informed by hip-hop as classic prog. (Fittingly, in a press release, Coyne described the album as a hybrid of A$AP Rocky and Syd Barrett.)

The singer traces that beat-heavy vibe directly to an ear-blasting subwoofer that he had installed in his home recording studio. And though many hardcore fans are enraged by Coyne's friendship with a former Disney child star, the band was coaxed further down that path by freak-pop collaborator Miley Cyrus, for whom they produced the 2015 LP *Miley Cyrus & Her Dead Petz*.

"Being around Miley, you end up hearing a lot of music, and a lot of it was rap," Coyne says, noting his fascination with hip-hop king (and fellow *Dead Petz* producer) Mike WiLL Made-It. "Little by little, we'd say, 'Wow, let's add more bassy shit in our songs!' The subwoofer thing really affected u . A lot of times in our previous records, we would pile on a lot of frequencies, but they wouldn't be so defined. But the more we played with it, the more we liked this dynamic, low, fat distortion with this very synthetic stuff on top of it. Then we'd hear hip-hop and go, 'Ahh, fuck, that's how they got that! That's how *we* got that!' It just opened up a whole new world to us."

While the Cyrus/subwoofer tandem edged the Lips in a new direction, they found more crucial inspiration in an unlikely spot: a used bookstore. The day before a concert in Baltimore, Coyne stumbled on a trippy-looking, Danish-language paperback, Erskine Caldwell's 1962 novel *Blisko Domu*. Compelled by its magnetic cover image—a woman's tear-soaked face—and encouraged by its dollar price tag, he bought the book on a whim and kept it in his studio. Flipping through the pages between sessions, he discovered phonetically vivid Polish phrases that meant both nothing and everything at once: "Oczy Mlody," which translates to "Eyes of the Young," sounded like a variation of "Oxycodone Melody," a druggy image that sparked a nerve in the musician.

(The hallucinogenic "There Should Be Unicorns" brings that image to life: Over pulsing drum machines and an Indian synth drone, Coyne sings of a decadent, futuristic party, full of "day-glo strippers" and ketchup-covered butterflie . "We're way beyond Learjets and mansions. We have our own planet; we can create our own sunrises," says multi-instrumentalist Steven Drozd, joking that the singer has been "hanging out with Miley Cyrus too much.")

"When you're searching for *that thing*, you don't know what's going to spark it," Coyne says. "And you don't know that when it sparks, if it'll continue to work. But once you give something a title, it starts to become more set in a mood and tone and identity. When we discovered this phrase, 'Oczy Mlody,' it kind of became nonsensical and full of meaning all at the same time. It could be whatever you want it to be, and calling the song that [name] started us on a new way of looking at things. It just sort of spoke to us—it gave us a confidence and ene gy to say, 'This is really working.' Instead of just having music floating a ound, sometimes you stumble on a combination of things—a new way of seeing the world. It's like a new mind. A lot of times, Steven and I will be watching a movie, and we'll say, 'I'm watching this with my new mind.' Maybe it is a movie you've seen fi e other times, but it's like, 'Let's see what it means to me now.'"

"Sometimes it's the title of the project or some art that Wayne's working on," Drozd adds. "I remember with [2006's] *At War With the Mystics*, I saw his painting that ended up becoming the cover of the album. The record wasn't done, or even half-done. When I saw that painting, it was like, 'I kinda get what this is gonna be now.' When he came up with the title for [2002's] *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*, all those songs seemed to fit in this same space. Once we knew the album was called *Oczy Mlody*, and as I saw the images he was working on from the album cover, it all fell together. 'What we're doing now—this is the

George Salisbury

vibe of the record.' It becomes easier in a weird way. It gives you this push over the cliff to finish it"

With *Oczy Mlody*, the Lips are officially no longer "rock band" in the traditional sense—both in sound and their approach to songcraft. Only two of the album's 12 tracks feature an acoustic drum kit, with guitars employed only for occasional texture. Coyne attributes much of this shift to working alongside Mike WiLL Made-It and Cyrus on the *Dead Petz* album, which altered his perspective on sound.

"They never looked at their music as being drummers and guitar players and stuff," he says. "We're so used to working as a group: You're the drummer; you're the bass player; I'm the singer. That's how a lot of groups like to work. We don't really work like that, but we still find oursel es thinking like that sometimes. Making music with Miley finally helped us b eak free of that. It's not drums and it's not guitar—it's not anything. It doesn't matter. It's just sounds. They can be anything you want them to be. It's like colors in a painting: If you want the sky to be purple, it can be purple. If you want the grass to be blue, it can be blue. The world can be whatever you want to make it."

Drozd echoes that point, emphasizing the band members' equally amorphous roles. While he joined the Lips in 1991 as a drummer, beefing up albums like *Transmissions from the Satellite Heart* and *Clouds Taste Metallic* with his syncopated, post-Bonham grooves, he quickly developed into their not-so-secret sonic weapon, adding a more refined, symphonic p og-rock touch with his keyboard and guitar work. Coyne has never been threatened by Drozd's multi-faceted skills—he's even encouraged his bandmate to sing more on their albums.

"Wayne doesn't feel like he needs to be the singer or the guitar player or anything," Drozd says. "He just wants it to be cool. On this new record, I'm doing a lot of the singing—probably even more than

"We are way beyond Learjets and mansions," Steven Drozd says of the band's current creative freedom.

The Terror. The ego is never involved with us."

Coyne and David Fridmann, the Lips' longtime producer, took the reins on exploring hip-hop influence , tweaking drum samples and programming beats with Ableton Live. It was an unexpected—but natural—shift for Drozd.

"The idea of just sitting and playing a regular drum beat nowadays just seems kinda dull," he says. "If I sit down and play a regular rock beat, I'm bored within 30 seconds. I'm glad there are people who are good at doing that. On this album, we built the songs from the beats in some cases."

They took the opposite approach with the dewy-eyed ballad "We a Family," which features a guest vocal from Cyrus. Drozd originally composed the track at home, working on its candy-coated structure for six months before showing it to the band. While he envisioned the song as a more "traditional pop song," Coyne and Fridmann added a gritty edge with skittering snares and rumbling synth-bass.

For Drozd, *Oczy Mlody* is the culmination of a "wild"

> "Being around Miley, you end up hearing a lot of music, and a lot of it was rap."
> **WAYNE COYNE**

trilogy, following *The Terror*—which worked through difficul themes such as Coyne's divorce and Drozd's brief drug relapse—and 2009 double-LP *Embryonic*, contrasting with the "pop songwriting" of their late-1990s/early 2000s work. But with its celestial melodies and dense, 3-D production, the album strikes the same cathartic nerve as classics like *The Soft Bulletin* and *Yoshimi*.

Throughout, Coyne blends fantastical, fairy tale imagery ("One Night While Wizard Hunting") with poignant reflections on death an human nature. For melancholy centerpiece "Sunrise," he tapped into the pain of a local Oklahoma family, whose mother died suddenly.

"Some of the kids are quite young," he says. "It was very intense, and there was a lot of attention toward them—but after a couple weeks, life truly does go on. And I remember the youngest girl saying, 'How can the world just keep turning now, like nothing ever happened?' It was yet another version of that despair, like, 'I can't just go back to school like nothing ever happened. My whole world is diffe ent now.' But it's true: Life does go on, even if you don't want it to. I think that's what songs do. Songs say that little thing that words and all that can't say. It's such a deep level. I think that's why Steven and I love those type of songs; they hint at something that nothing else in the world can do. Only music can speak about that. And if you feel things deeply, you want music to do that. It's a great relief to know, 'Oh, I'm not alone.'"

On "The Castle," inspired by a friend's suicide and the deceptively deep lyrics to Peter, Paul and Mary's "Puff, the Magic Dragon," Coyne uses a decaying physical castle as a metaphor for heartbreak.

"I wasn't even thinking I needed to write a song, to tell you the truth," he says. "But the studio emptied out a bit early one night—around midnight, as opposed to around 2 a.m. I was thinking about this woman that we know and her sister. Sometimes with songs, something sad has happened but somehow, within the song, you say, 'everything's going to be alright.' But this doesn't do that. When I sing, 'The castle can never be rebuilt again,' that really works for me. I didn't have any other lyrics at the time, but I knew the woman that ended up killing herself was all about dragons and fairy tales. That setting was very much in my mind. There was a painting I'd seen that a couple did down at the gallery, and part of it looked like a castle—kind of a drippy, fairy tale, desolate castle. Like it would crumble, this magic place, and it couldn't be put back together. And that helped me say that to myself—to sort of confront the impossible sadness that this can't be fi ed. I think part of this was the idea that it's a very funny little song, but as you got closer and closer, the sadness would reveal itself. It wouldn't be apparently sad but, somewhere along the way, it would reveal itself."

Oczy Mlody, like The Flaming Lips' most revered albums, combines all these qualities: It's simultaneously funny and sad, deep and superficial, sophi ticated and accessible. But it's most essential asset, as Drozd notes, is its vitality: "If you hear this record, you don't think, 'This is a band who's been around for 30 years doing the same thing over again.'" r

George Salisbury

YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS

Neil Young has always followed his muse, even if it means putting aside one of his cherished projects. And, with the help of Willie Nelson's sons, he's in the midst of one of his most prolific periods et.

BY MIKE GREENHAUS

DH Lovelife

few years ago, the TransCanada Corporation proposed a section of the Keystone XL Pipeline that was slated to cross the Ponca Tribe's "Trail of Tears." Neil Young didn't like that one bit, so he took action the only way he knows how to when a cause moves him to join the front line—he put together an all-star concert with some of his famous friends.

The benefit sh w, dubbed "Harvest of Hope," took place in late September 2014 on the Tanderup family's farm along the route near Neligh, Neb., featuring co-organizer Willie Nelson, his twenty-something sons Lukas and Micah and a number of area musicians. Young was about to launch into a round of solo dates at the time, so he asked Willie's sons and the members of Lukas' band Promise of the Real to back him for the second portion of his set. The collaboration clicked, and Young walked away from the benefit with both a new group and enough political ammunition to help convince President Obama to veto the proposed section of the pipeline a few months later.

"They're an amazing band, and they have a great groove," Young says of Promise of the Real, who have grown into his closest musical allies, two years and a flurry of new albums later. "So, when we play together, we can improvise and jam, and they all sing great. They all sing more on pitch than I do. It was about stopping the Keystone [XL Pipeline] from going through a farmer's land. Everybody was there so I said, 'I'll show you a couple songs I want to do,' and we did 'em. 'Who's Gonna Stand Up?' was one of the fir t things we learned."

Young had already tested the waters two weeks earlier in Raleigh, N.C., during Farm Aid—the charitable show he regularly hosts with the Nelson family—inviting Lukas and Micah to sit in for his final selection of the night, "Rockin' in the Free World." He had recently wrapped-up a European tour alongside his fie ce, improv-heavy, garage-rock group Crazy Horse, with whom he had been exploring some new material, including the eco-conscious protest anthem "Who's Gonna Stand Up?"

It was perfect timing: Despite Lukas' family lineage, Promise of the Real have always been more of a jamband than a country outfit or ven an Americana act and, less than a month later, Young asked them to back him during his other annual event, the Bridge School Benefit Concert. Micah—who has his own psych-punk-orchestra, Insects vs. Robots—signed on as something of an "in-residence" auxiliary member of the ensemble. Young hasn't looked back since.

"They're very supportive, and they're a working unit—nothing's in their way," Young says while calling from his Los Angeles home in December. "They love my music, and they actually come to me with suggestions all the time with songs they'd like to do. And I know that whatever song I want to do, they can learn how to play it as soon as I show it to them. So it's given me between fi e and eight times more songs to play than I've ever had before in my life. That makes it a lot of fun and that's why I keep doing it—because I'm having a good time."

Though Young is famously one of rock's most restless spirits, during the past few years, he's jumped between projects at an even more fervent pace than usual. In 2010, he reunited with Buffalo Springfield for the fi t time since 1968 for a Bridge School appearance and stuck with the legendary group for a handful of dates in 2011, before putting *that* not-in-this-lifetime tour to bed so that he could revive another long-dormant ensemble, Crazy Horse.

He spent much of the next three years on the road and in the studio with Crazy Horse, but not without some bumps in the road. First, the quartet cancelled a few dates in 2013, including a headlining appearance at the inaugural Lockn' Festival, when guitarist Frank "Poncho" Sampedro broke his hand and, the following year, Rick Rosas subbed for bassist Billy Talbot after he suffe ed a stroke. In addition to solo dates that recalled Young's early work under his own name, he even found time for a one-off CSNY reunion at Bridge School in 2013.

Young has also entered into one of the most prolific periods of his recording career, releasing six proper albums in the past fi e years in a variety of configu ations, as well as a slew of live and archival offering . On the studio front, he partnered with Crazy Horse for a set of repurposed traditional numbers and children's ditties, *Americana*, and for the equally hard-rocking *Psychedelic Pill* in 2012. Then there was both the unexpected set of singer-songwriter covers *A Letter Home*—recorded at Jack White's Third Man Records—and the swinging big-band set *Storytone* in 2014, as well as a collection of originals captured at a converted movie house with Promise of the Real, *The Monsanto Years*. More recently, in December 2016, he dropped a stripped-down album, *Peace Trail*, and he's already back in the studio working with Micah, Lukas and his band.

Though Young laid down *Peace Trail* with noted session drummer Jim Keltner and bassist Paul Bushnell, Promise of the Real's spirit guided the sessions. In fact, Young fir t heard about Bushnell through Micah, who nabbed the bassist for his upcoming album.

"I have been playing with Promise of the Real and I still am playing with them, but they weren't available," Young says of their absence from the record, though they've toyed with some *Peace Trail* songs live. "They were on the road and the songs just came to me and I wanted to record them, so I called up Jimmy. We're good, old buddies and we understand how to do it together and have a great time, so I just went for that and we did this record."

Young recorded *Peace Trail* in only four days at Rick Rubin's Shangri-La Studios, and most of the 10 tracks are fir t or second takes. He produced the album—his 37th—with longtime collaborator John Hanlon, and the swift rollout allowed Young to address some of the day's pressing issues. In particular, numbers like "Indian Givers" rally in support of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, whose land is currently being threatened by the Dakota Access Pipeline.

"They're an amazing band, and they have a great groove," Young says of Promise of the Real. "So, when we play together, we can improvise and jam and they all sing great."

Jay Blakesberg

"Some of these songs are about things that are going on right now," he says. "The First Nations people and the corporations are going at it head to head, and it's a historic moment. It'll probably continue up there all winter long and get bigger and bigger."

He pauses to address how the situation has changed as more musicians and volunteers have lent their voices. "The situation is bigger than it was when I wrote [these songs]," Young says. "This thing is growing, and it's an awareness of a situation that we face in this country and other countries like it so it strikes a chord with everyone. Corporations are controlling our government—and that's what's going on. Now, we have them head to head. Someone says, 'You can't do this,' and the corporation says, 'We're doing it anyway.'"

Other parts of the largely acoustic *Peace Trail* are more closely related to Young's own life. "Can't Stop Working" feels like a direct statement on his reluctance to slow down, despite pushing past age 71, and "My New Robot" is perhaps the first relationship song to feature a cameo by Amazon Echo's voice-activated assistant Alexa.

Young has devoted a lot of time and energy in recent years to launching Pono—a music download service and dedicated music player focusing on high-quality recorded audio. The autotune-colored "My Pledge" is a meditation on how people listen to music in the modern era that namechecks both the Mayflower and Jimi Hendrix. (Young, who recently revealed that he even met with Donald Trump a few years ago to potentially invest in Pono, went so far as to remove his music from streaming sites a few years ago due to what he considered their poor sound quality. His music has since returned to Spotify, Apple Music and others.)

"I've made records for a really long time and what I hear is what I want people to hear," Young says of the song. "That's why I make records. So I fear for the way people are going to hear what it is I create because I know how much that end of it has gone down—I think about that. So when I say, 'I hear Jimi Hendrix' that means I'm hearing something coming o˜ of a MP3 player through some speakers and it sounds like it's [coming from] a bad TV or something. It's very literal. It's a word-for-word description." Most of the songs on *Peace Trail* came to him after his tour with the Nelsons, yet Young is careful to note that they are still elastic enough to live outside any one project. "Each song comes in the room, looks around," he says. "It either comes or goes—sits down or stands—but it's by itself. They're not constructed for anyone else except for themselves. They're not built so they'll fit into what a certain band can play or a certain sound."

* * *

IN OCTOBER, YOUNG WAS ONE of six marquee acts handpicked by Coachella tastemakers Goldenvoice to play the classic-rock summit Desert Trip. Unlike most of his peers—who relied on radio-anthems and a catalog of older material to connect with their festival-size audience—Young rolled in with a new band, Promise of the Real, and explored both his cornerstone works and selections from the then-unreleased *Peace Trail*. He appeared before Paul McCartney both weekends and, since Promise of the Real is comprised of musicians less than half his age, helped bring the event's average performer age down by a few decades.

"It was wonderful playing there," Young says. "We booked a whole bunch of other shows in front of it so, by the time we got to it, we'd just be toasty enough so that it wouldn't matter. We just wanted to be out of it by the time we got out there. We rented this beautiful local place that had a bunch of hot springs and a pool. We had the whole place to ourselves and were together as a band and had a great time. We got through it without it being anything big or di˜ erent than anything else—but it was still

Young performing in Mountain View, Calif., at the 2016 Bridge School Benefit oncert. He joined a mix of musicians on-stage throughout the weekend, including Metallica, Roger Waters, My Morning Jacket, Norah Jones and Nils Lofgren.

Jay Blakesberg

big and diffe ent because we were with all these huge bands."

He also offe ed the dream lineup's only headliner cross-pollination, joining McCartney for "A Day in the Life," "Give Peace a Chance" and "Why Don't We Do It in the Road?" both weekends. ("A Day in the Life" has actually been in Young's repertoire for years, and he shared a memorable version onstage with McCartney at London's historic Hyde Park in 2009.)

Young isn't sure who made the initial call about reprising the sit-in at Desert Trip but says they rehearsed the song punk-rock style in his trailer backstage. "We were in there just singing, working out some changes and things," he says. "It's great to play with Paul—I've always loved Paul. We've been good friends for a long time and it just grew out of a natural lifetime of things that have happened to both of us, and people that we've known in common. He's such a great musician, and I enjoyed being able to get up there with him and give him something to bounce off o —give him a little bit of something else."

Though his setlists have rarely been static in a traditional arena-rock way, since joining forces with Promise of the Real, Young has dug deeper into his own songbook than he has in years. His recent string of bustouts have included his fir t performance of "Piece of Crap" since 2001, the return of "Cripple Creek Ferry" after keeping the song on ice since 1997, the unveiling of "Like an Inca" after a 30-plus year break and even the live debut of the tender 1970 *After the Gold Rush* favorite "'Till the Morning Comes," among other rarities.

He credits Promise of the Real with unearthing some of this material, admitting that he has "a lot of songs I can play at the drop of a hat" with their insistence. "We sat and learned 80 or 90 songs in the span of fi e days before we even got to rehearsals with Neil," Lukas says. "Neil was really stoked with the vibe, so we kept going."

Given that Young has taken on several presidents, wars and countless cultural concerns in his music, it would come as no surprise if he revived any of his older tunes in response to the day's current political climate. Young brushes off that question, saying, "Well, none in particular. They're all just individual songs—I don't look at them that way. I look at them as individual moments. Some of them stand up and ring true at diffe ent times as the years go by, and that's just the nature of it. 'After the Gold Rush' is a song that seems to be having another moment, where there's something about it—I noticed people were relating to it strongly during my last group of shows. It's funny the way it just comes and goes, but I'm just doing what I'm doing—writing songs as I feel like writing them and then playing them."

He did, however, decide to capture his instant connection with Promise of the Real on the double-disc, triple-LP live set *Earth*. Far from a traditional concert souvenir, *Earth* is a carefully curated survey of Young's stories concerning the land and living together in this world. It's also something of a studio-show hybrid, buffin

up Young and Promise of the Real's raw stage performances with animal sounds and effect . He already considers it among his favorite records.

"I put so much love into it and so much care into making it," he says humbly. "We broke the rules of making a live record; we weren't trying to make it sound live. I think our post-production on *Earth* was about four months—there's a lot of layers to what we did to those live performances, while still maintaining the live mix that came out of the PA. We didn't remix them, but we did add obvious overdubs and used them in ways that were more like a novel than a record. There were all these other ideas happening, like it was part of something—a bigger picture where, if you zoomed in on it, it was live. But if you pulled back, there were a lot of things going on. It's an Earth story."

The album is also a choice document of one of Young's most exploratory projects yet. Lukas, in particular, has deep ties to the modern jamband scene and has fostered a close relationship with Bob Weir. More than any of Young's bands since Crazy Horse, Promise of the Real have proven to be his ideal improvisational sparring partners. "Neil is one of the ultimate jammers—not many people go as hard as he does, in terms of full-on open jamming and he's never slowed down," Lukas says. "He was a huge part of my roots along with the Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan. That, along with the great old country music I listened to through Dad, really makes up who I am."

"It's very healthy; you gotta trust yourself," Young adds. "It feels excellent, and there's nothing about it that's not free. It's full of whatever is happening. So there's no way you could compare that to anything. It's not better or worse. It is what it is."

Young's current work in the exploratory realm sits better with him than another relatively recent crossover into the jam scene, when he headlined the second Bonnaroo festival in 2003 with Crazy Horse. Despite a dream setlist that strayed from that tour's complete performance of the *Greendale* rock opera and exposed him to a younger audience, Young is somewhat critical of the gig.

"We played that show and we had a pretty good time, but we didn't really get that high," he says. "The music didn't really take off when e would go into improvisational parts in songs—there's no right and wrong, or even good and bad with that kind of stuff, but it can get to be cosmic and ethereal and powerful and dangerous, not just those words that are only applied to music like sharp and flat. As I remember it, we felt like we came up short for those particular two or three long songs we did where we were jamming."

He pauses and backpedals a bit as he thinks about the many fans who experienced Crazy Horse for the fir t time that night. "On the other hand, if you've never heard it before—and you weren't living it every second like we were—some people might've really gotten a lot out of it. But my own personal recollection is that we didn't really knock it out of the park at that show."

* * *

YOUNG HAS EXPERIENCED HIS fair share of changes off the stage and outside the studio in recent years, too. In 2014, he filed for di orce from his wife of 36 years, Pegi, and moved out of their longtime Broken Arrow Ranch home in Redwood City, Calif., to be near his girlfriend, actress Daryl Hannah. Being in Los Angeles has allowed Young easy access to area studios and placed him back in the public consciousness. The changes in his life have also contributed to his new approaches.

"Really, it all came from having the time and the support in my life," Young says of his increased studio output in recent years. "And the love around me and the ability to do just what I felt like doing."

Daryl Hannah

Young credits his experiments while working on *Earth* with helping his creative juices fl w in the studio and for bringing "a lot of other things to the fore for me." He jokes that he felt people were looking at him like he was out of his mind when he started incorporating animal sounds, but that he "felt the freedom to do what it is I thought I knew I could do as an artist. That's why all these things are happening. I feel good and I feel like I have a gift that I can continue using and enjoying, so nothing's in my way. There's nothing to stop me.

"It just made me more aware of the beauty of working in the studio, so that's why I've put aside some time now to spend in the studio to do some things," he continues. "Some people might think that what I come up with won't be any more on top of it than what I've already done, but there are new things that I can do in the studio and I have the tools to do them. It's fascinating to me and it's a lasting document. At however old I am, it's a good idea to make a lasting document, so I wanted to give myself a little chance to do that. I'm just enjoying being in the studio."

Young is currently halfway through a new album with Promise of the Real and, after he canceled a few 2017 Australia and New Zealand dates to continue recording, rumors circulated that he would stay off the oad for the rest of the year. "Well, right now, I don't have any plans to tour, but I won't close the door on anything, at any time," he admits. "But I don't have any commitments."

He describes his latest batch of originals as "like movies—like scenes." Though they are topical vignettes, Young says the new material is more "stream of consciousness," tied together with diffe ent themes and places.

"You go to one environment and you're looking around, and you end up somewhere else," he says. "You're with somebody who was talking to you very personally, then somebody's yelling at you and rapping and going crazy, and it's a diffe ent situation. Then you find ourself drifting on a boat in heaven somewhere, or en route to heaven, or coming back or watching traffic. eople are building boxes and houses on the streets everywhere. You fin yourself in a place like that."

His other major project is a new, interactive presentation of his extensive archives. He says that the project "is coming in a couple of diffe ent ways," but promises that "you don't have to subscribe or anything to get in there.

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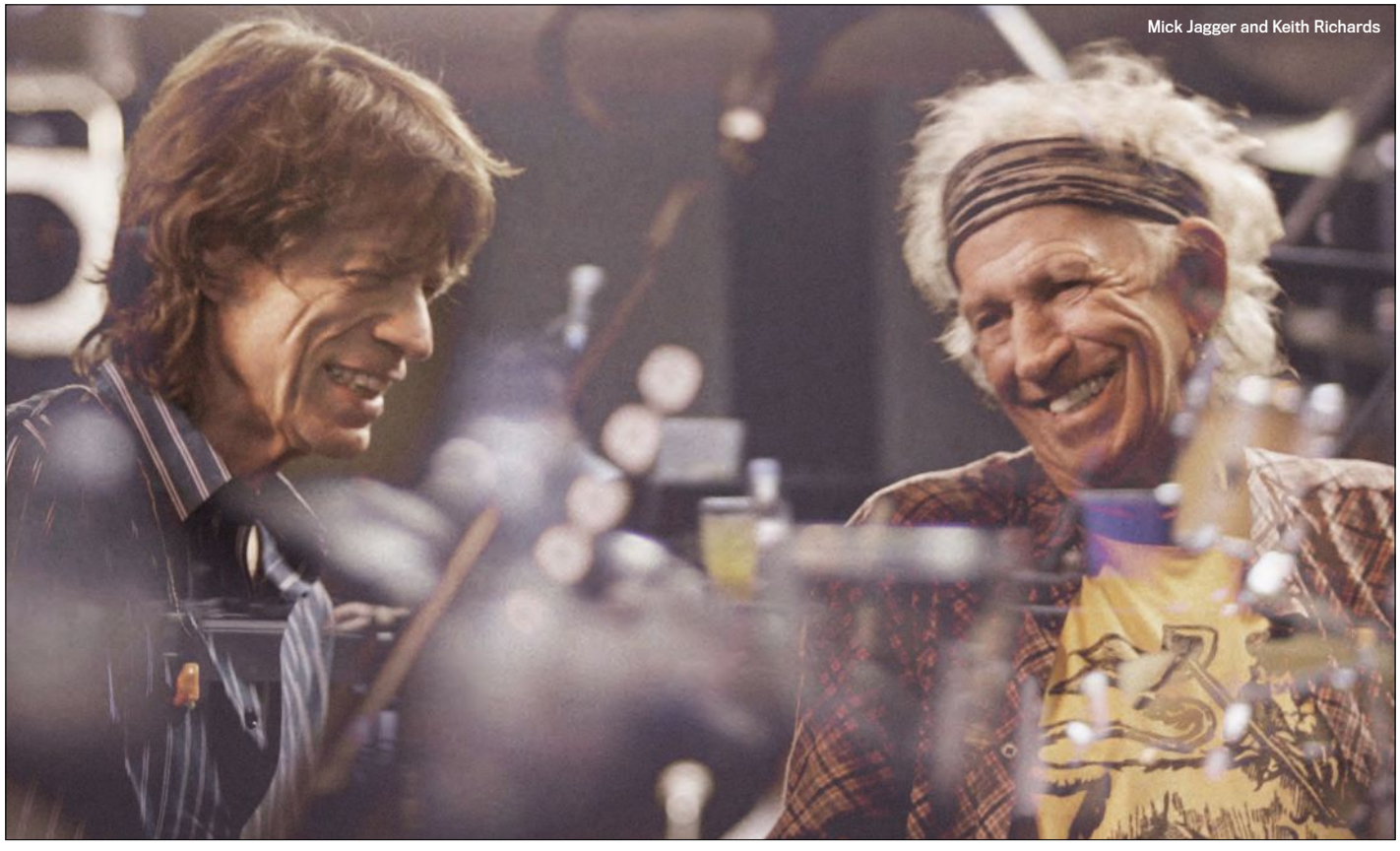
Reviews

Compiled by MIKE GREENHAUS



Mick Jagger and Keith Richards

THE ROLLING STONES Blue & Lonesome

INTERSCOPE/POLYDOR

They named themselves after a classic Muddy Waters song, and they've dropped some choice covers over the years—Willie Dixon's "Little Red Rooster," Robert Johnson's "Love in Vain" and Mississippi Fred McDowell's "You Gotta Move" come to mind—but somehow, **The Rolling Stones** never got around to making a down-home blues album until they pulled the trigger on *Blue & Lonesome*. According to **Keith Richards**, it all happened by accident. Hunkered down with producer **Don Was** in Mark Knopfler's British Grove Studios in West London, the Stones were starting work on new material when they dusted off ome tried-and-true blues numbers, just to get a sound together. Within a matter of days, they'd bashed out a dozen chestnuts—four of which, including the title cut, were originally written and recorded by Little Walter for the fabled Chess label.

That's where the sense of a circle being closed illuminates *Blue & Lonesome* like a ring of fire. Everyone knows the story of how Richards met **Mick Jagger** back in 1961, and how the gutbucket moan of the Chicago bluesmen inspired them to start a band. Over the ensuing 50 years, the hard-fought miles and experience have gradually revealed the Stones to be the blues heroes of their youthful dreams. As tandems go, no one but Richards and **Ronnie Wood** can nail the dueling rattlesnake guitars of Eddie Taylor's "Ride 'Em on Down" (which featured the great Jimmy Reed) with such pugnacity, while Jagger sounds literally electrified by Little Walter's "Just Your Fool" and Dixon's "I Can't Quit You Baby," attacking the echo-drenched microphone with an abandon that recalls the original '60s Chess sides.

Digging deeper, more rich colors hit the canvas—in particular, Jagger's inimitable harmonica, sharp as a switchblade on Howlin' Wolf's "Commit a Crime" and uncannily mournful on "Hoo Doo Blues." (As Richards puts it in his autobiography: "Little Walter would smile in his grave for the way Mick plays.") **Eric Clapton** throws down a loose, languid slide solo on "Everybody Knows About My Good Thing," capturing the tipsy, hypnotic swing of the Little Johnny Taylor original. And **Charlie Watts**, steady as ever on drums, lends a soft but marauding touch to "Little Rain," with bassist **Darryl Jones** joining him in the pocket on the up-tempo barroom brawler "Just Like I Treat You"—another Dixon gem.

Up until now, it might have been true that the Stones hadn't made a truly great studio album since the '80s. (And whether said slab qualifies as *Tattoo You*, *Undercover* or even *Steel Wheels* is still a matter for debate.) *Blue & Lonesome* finds Jagger, Richards, Wood and Watts delivering with just the right amount of vintage swagger and sass to torch that notion.

Bill Murphy

Kings of Leon

WALLS RCA

"A man ain't a man unless he has desire," **Caleb Followill** croons on "WALLS," the sparse, starry-eyed power ballad that closes **Kings of Leon**'s seventh LP. Ever since the band erupted into ubiquitous mainstream success with the New Wave-strut of "Sex on Fire," earning the adulation of both hipsters and soccer moms alike, that observation has loomed heavy over the rock veterans: What are the Kings' desires, anyway? Arena domination or artful evolution? And is it possible to achieve both? With *WALLS*, the Followill clan seems to have found their answer, at least for now. The album opens with "Waste a Moment," a live-wire jolt of power chords, tumbling drum fills and an "oh-oh" chorus reminiscent of slow-burning smash "Use Somebody." From there, it's a series of taut riffs and breezy hooks, rubbed down with their requisite amount of Southern-rock grease. While it's sad to think these guys might have outgrown their experimental phase—remember 2007's *Because of the Times*?—it's a relief to hear the Followills stop overthinking. Though some tracks feel reheated (the lighter-waving "Over"), others surge with immediacy and confidence—from "Around the World," with its clavinet-laced funkiness, to ghostly power-pop shout-along "Find Me." Curious, then, that *WALLS*' most gripping moment is its sole head-scratcher, the Latin-styled "Muchacho," full of wispy drum machine and mournful Wurlitzer. Kings of Leon have reached a comfortable plateau with *WALLS*, but desire often resurfaces in unexpected ways.

Ryan Reed

David Crosby

Lighthouse GROUNDUP/VERVE

So CSN is dead. Mourn if you like, but **David Crosby** won't be joining you. He's over it, he's moved on, and he's in a good place. So good that he's just released what might be his most fulfilling solo album since his first, 1971's *If I Could Only Remember My Name*. That one, of course, was made by a much younger man living in a different time. Crosby—now sober, clear-headed and, from what he's been saying in public, just so touched to be alive and productive—is only interested in going forward. Toward that end, he's teamed here with **Michael League**, bassist and nominal leader of Snarky Puppy, a contemporary jazz-rooted band that Croz has been talking up for the past couple of years. It's a union that actually makes plenty of sense: Crosby's a lifelong jazz fan and he's always incorporated jazzy chording into his compositions. But despite the presence of League and other jazz players among the personnel, *Lighthouse* is largely filled with stark, direct tunes. The singer—whose voice is as golden as ever—places the words and guitar up front, which is all the better because these songs demand close scrutiny. Most, like "Drive Out to the Desert" and "Paint You a Picture," are minimally populated vocally and instrumentally. Others, among them the silky "Look in Their Eyes" and "The City," with its familiar harmony blend, open up other vistas, and the closing "By the Light of Common Day," with its sage wisdom ("You have to go faithfully each day, and open up your head some way, somehow") and **Becca Stevens** vocals is a parting message that will leave you as content as the man singing it. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Yo La Tengo

Murder in the Second Degree EGON

There's a certain kind of magic that **Yo La Tengo** achieve every year during their annual appearance on listener-supported New Jersey radio station WFMU where, in return for donations, they play covers from memory over the air. There's also a certain kind of tedium that sometimes settles in, a tightrope between how much the band might remember, whether the song will veer into a goof, self-destruction or a genuinely gorgeous performance nearly worthy of the band's cover-oriented classic *Fakebook*. Like *Stuff Like That There*, their recent companion to *Fakebook*, their second collection of WFMU covers—*Murder in the Second Degree*, naturally—finds the band performing with an increasing depth, manifesting in an assured spontaneity (a segue from Traffic's "The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys" into Neil Young's "Mr. Soul" and back), gorgeous instrumentals (one minute of Willie Nelson's "Crazy"), outright beauty (the **Georgia Hubley**/**James McNew** duet on the Bee Gees' "To Love Somebody") or casual confidence (**Ira Kaplan** knocking out a jangle-pop version of Mike Nesmith's incredibly wordy "Different Drum"). Fully in the tradition of The Turtles' *Rhythm Butchers* LPs or The Beach Boys' *Party!*, Yo La Tengo's WFMU sets are a quietly important part of the veteran band's work and art, outlining a skewed and still-developing canon of shared songs. Stretching from The Kinks ("King Kong") to Bad Brains ("Pay to Cum"), from the Grateful Dead ("Bertha") to The Ronettes (Hubley nailing "Be My Baby"), the idiosyncrasy of the performances imbues each with the power to resonate or infuriate. Laughing is OK, too, and so is singing along (and pledging to WFMU).

Jesse Jarnow

Lee Fields & The Expressions

Special Night BIG CROWN

Like the pyramids of Giza or the Sphinx itself, *Lee Fields* doesn't change, but he gives you everything he's got, and he's a national treasure for that very reason. *Special Night* is a fitting testament to his consistency. He delivers husky, hard-as-nails soul music with a vintage patina—thanks, in part, to **The Expressions,** comprising various members of Bushwick's own Daptone crew—with lyrics that often take gut-wrenchingly modern twists, from the confessional "Work to Do" ("Now I know it's time for me to take some responsibility/ That's why I'm gonna be at the counselor's office Monday at a quarter to three") to the psychedelic funk anthem "Make the World" ("Boots on the ground, that's what they say/ Send those mothers, patch your sons so far away"). Now, nearly 10 albums into a career renaissance that started taking off in earnest back in the late '90s, Fields has finally hit a groove that accentuates all his talents as a singer; his emotional range runs from wistfully romantic ("Lover Man") to sweat-soaked yearning worthy of Otis Redding ("Let Him In"), and he taps into it with all the naked honesty of someone who has truly lived through the vivid stories he tells. ***Bill Murphy***

Kings of Leon

Jim Lauderdale

This Changes Everything SKY CRUNCH

You know those records in your collection that, within the first five seconds you heard them, you knew they were going to leave you wanting more? *This Changes Everything* is one of those records. The very first sound you hear is a blast of pure, unadorned steel guitar, followed immediately by the most crystalline acoustic guitar chord imaginable, fading into vibrato. Then comes **Jim Lauderdale**'s voice: "It was gettin' half past late, then from out of the blue, my hopes that had escaped came back when I saw you." It's the title track from the latest by one of the most prolific, in-demand and highly respected artists in the Americana vein, and already you're hooked by its honesty and warmth. Over the course of its 11 tracks, co-written by Lauderdale with various colleagues, the veteran singer-songwriter serves up reminder after reminder of what real country music is all about. Although there isn't anything that suggests deliberate throwback, it's hard not to think of this set—which Lauderdale has described as one giant love letter to the music of Texas—wistfully. Each tune feels immediately at home in your head. "Lost in the Shuffle," an uptempo slice of honky-tonk, tells a simple but universal tale of the one that's getting away ("I've got this dance until you walk away"), while "We Really Shouldn't Be Doing This," the only sole writing credit of the set and originally cut by George Strait, is nearly Jimmy Buffett-level tropical in its joyous, skipping rhythm. There isn't a track on it that you won't want to hear again and again.

Jeff Tamarkin

Hiss Golden Messenger

Heart Like a Levee MERGE

As its title implies, *Heart Like a Levee* offers a wellspring of emotion barely contained by wistful melodies, sweetly strummed guitars, muted brass and vocals as heartbreaking as the songs themselves. It's the sort of sound that singer, songwriter and frontman **M.C. Taylor** has consistently been drawn to, beginning with his tenure in San Francisco's The Court & Spark. The sixth studio album in a decidedly low-lit career, *Heart Like a Levee* is predominantly shimmering folk-pop with an occasional shuffle that perks up the pacing. "I feel like a million dollars," Taylor insists on the otherwise subdued "Say It Like You Mean It," its title suggesting the irony of supposed good feelings pitted against a decidedly dim refrain. Granted, the uncertainty that shrouds these songs suggests the sentiments are hazy, to say the least. Still, the abundance of gorgeous ballads—"Biloxi," "Heart Like a Levee," "As the Crow Flies" and "Ace of Cups Hung Low Band" in particular—more than make up for any dire circumstances. When Taylor asks, "Do you hate me as much as I hate myself?" it's best to ignore that silly suggestion and enjoy the blissful music instead.

Lee Zimmerman

The Olympians

The Olympians DAPTONE

Ever since the 1996 release of Mike Jackson & The Soul Providers' *The Revenge of Mister Mopoji*—a retro-soul soundtrack to a fictional kung fu film, produced by future Dap-Kings founder **Gabe Roth** for the then-fledgling Desco label—deep concept albums have been Daptone's bread-and-butter. *The Olympians* certainly fits the profile; lushly decked out with grainy-sounding strings, horns, harp, vibes and easygoing, loopy grooves, it smacks of cheesy instrumental grindhouse soundtracks from the '70s, with the "concept" being the Greek mythology-inspired "Temple of Sound" that apparently came to producer **Toby Pazner** in a dream. It's of a piece with early Daptone releases by The Daktaris and The Budos Band, and features a host of topflight musicians from the same orbit—saxophonist **Neal Sugarman**, guitarist **Thomas Brenneck** and drummer **Evan Pazner** among them—so if you know the records, then you know the ritual. Whether it's in the funky lilt of "Apollo's Mood" or the wah-soaked guitar-and-clavinet tandem of the Sly Stone-ish "Europa and the Bull," the all-pro sound never lies, and that's the key to this album's enduring charm. ***Bill Murphy***

Jeremiah Lockwood

Kol Nidre BECAUSE JEWISH

Worship music with a contemporary makeover is a long tradition in rock-and-roll—gospel was one of the pillars of the genre, and Hindu influences show up all over the psychedelic scene. But few efforts stick so closely to the source material as *Kol Nidre*, the new album from The Sway Machinery's **Jeremiah Lockwood**, organist **Shoko Nagai** and drummer **John Bollinger**. **Rabbi Dan Ain** produced the set and, for the past five years in New York, Lockwood and Ain have led their own service for Kol Nidre, the opening incantations of Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement. But this year, they hit the studio before they hit the synagogue. For Jewish listeners, their recording will likely sound familiar—these are the actual Hebrew chants set to atmospheric organ, rumbling drums and minimal guitar—and could appeal as a new gateway to a deeply religious tradition or a mind-expanding reinterpretation. But if you've never sat through Kol Nidre before, then the album still presents some mystically beautiful music. Lockwood's winding, spidery guitar on album opener "Kol Nidre, No. 3" could put you in a trance, and the gentle pop touch of "Birkas Kohanim" is pure sunshine. When the group strays from the Hebrew on tracks like "Everybody's Got to Be Tried," the effect isn't quite as inspiring. Ultimately, though, *Kol Nidre* is an experiment in combining worlds, one that's as fascinating as it is entertaining.

Justin Jacobs

Bell X1

Arms BELLY UP

Bell X1 wrote and recorded their latest effort, *Arms*, in their hometown of Dublin with producers **Tommy McLoughlin** and **Glenn Keating**, and that familiar intimacy translates to the music itself. The indie-rock numbers, tinged with folk elements, resonate with warmth, even when the songs tiptoe into emotionally bittersweet territory. "Bring Me a Fire King" has a melancholy feeling—particularly when a line of horns laces through it—but the musicians keep themselves open, offering every emotion and every note to the listener as if they were in the same room. Ballad-esque "I Go Where You Go" resounds with a reassuring romantic sentiment, while propulsive rocker "Out of Love" ponders the effects of love lost. As a whole, the album, which is the band's seventh, is generous with its audience, giving each listener the opportunity to feel what the musicians feel. In that way, it's cathartic and comforting. Emotionally, the center is moody single "The Upswing," a song that grapples with how to connect with another. On the track, singer **Paul Noonan** croons, "Even without trying to/ you got me on the upswing," which is a feeling that also applies to this album.

Emily Zemler

TAUK

Sir Nebula SELF-RELEASED

After giving fans a taste of their explosive live show with last year's *HEADROOM*, the Long Island, N.Y.-based quartet returns with a new album of meditative, spacey prog-rock, the appropriately titled *Sir Nebula*. The group's third studio album finds the band settling even further into their style and cohesiveness, with aid from veteran producer **Robert Carranza**, whose eclectic résumé includes credits ranging from Jack Johnson to The Mars Volta, and who has been at the helm for all of **TAUK**'s studio efforts since their debut LP. "This time around, it feels like we know how we approach things," guitarist **Matt Jalbert** said during the sessions with Carranza. "I feel a looseness that this album has, compared to the other ones—we are letting things breathe a bit, rather than forcing things to happen." That sort of ease comes through from the beginning of the record and throughout, in the rapid-fire guitar of opening track "Horizon" and in the piercing synth lines from **Alric "A.C." Carter**. "Time's Up" features melodic guitar coupled with some reggae-tinged grooves and fierce fills from bassist **Charlie Dolan**, while the slow-burning "Resolve" highlights the strengths of all four members, notably drummer **Isaac Teel**, with a more restrained, jazzy edge. The following track, the eight-and-a-half-minute-long "Darkwing," opens with a somewhat unexpected grand-piano intro and features multiple builds, including a climax with a distorted, staccato synth tone that sounds downright otherworldly.

Matt Inman

Luke Temple

A Hand Through the Cellar Door

SECRETLY CANADIAN

Luke Temple, mastermind of experimental indie-pop act Here We Go Magic, began his career noodling with folk tunes in his Brooklyn bedroom. So the stripped-bare, all-acoustic format of his fifth solo LP feels less like a reinvention than a return to roots. The obvious reference points are classic singer-songwriters like Paul Simon and Nick Drake, two consistent influences on his plainspoken vocal style—and setting aside Here We Go Magic's forays into Krautrock and psychedelia, the comparisons flow on a deeper level. The arrangements are disarmingly raw with flickers of fingerpicked guitar, pulses of double-bass, streaks of cello—all emphasizing the natural warmth of his singing. (A crucial element of "The Birds of Late December" is a barely there tap-tap-tap on a snare rim.) On several ruminative story-songs, Temple speak-sings revelations about cultural shifts ("The Complicated Men of the 1940s") and a high school bully discovering inner peace after a car crash ("The Case of Louis Warren"). But even on this capital-F folk album, he can't help but nudge toward art-rock: Both the galloping "Estimated World" and "Smashing Glass," with its falsetto swoops and eerie, Asian-tinged guitar figure, feel like Here We Go Magic tracks without the typical layered overdubs. With *A Hand Through the Cellar Door*, Temple has pressed an artistic reset button, rediscovering the elemental charm of his songwriting.

Ryan Reed

Blitzen Trapper

Live at Third Man Records THIRD MAN

Jack White's Third Man Records tends to embrace "real" rock-and-roll, or at least White's definition of that term, which usually involves grit, fervor and performative raw production. **Blitzen Trapper**'s folky numbers fit the bill, especially when laid bare onstage at White's record label office in Nashville. This album collects 10 of the Portland, Ore., group's songs, culled from their eight full-length albums. It's the band's third foray into a live record and that isn't surprising—the musicians excel onstage, infusing their tracks with intimate, evocative vigor during their shows. It's evident here, particularly on "Nights Were Made for Love," a propulsive number that comes off the band's 2015 album, *All Across This Land*. "Love the Way You Walk Away," from 2011's *American Goldwing*, translates perfectly to a live album—its acoustic soulfulness and harmonica lines are particularly compelling when stripped of their initial production. Blitzen Trapper has trekked extensively across the U.S. on tour, and the weight of their experience onstage shows itself. Each song feels raw and new, but also skillfully executed. There's a perfect balance of in-the-moment feeling and practice showcased on this album, as there is in their live show. "Furr" is the record's highlight, laced with harmonica and carried by singer **Eric Earley**'s bluesy croon. The song is also the title track of Blitzen Trapper's 2008 highly acclaimed disc, and it sounds almost classic now. White may be finicky about music, but his predilections are a good filter for what Third Man ends up producing and releasing—and this LP is evidence of that.

Emily Zemler

Various Artists

Dear Jerry: Celebrating the Music of Jerry Garcia ROUNDER

Recorded live in May 2015, shortly before the Dead's Fare Thee Well celebration, the Dear Jerry show actually marked the first time **Phil Lesh**, **Bill Kreutzmann**, **Mickey Hart** and **Bob Weir** shared the stage during their 50th anniversary year. (Though Lesh appears with his own ensemble instead of his Grateful

Dead brethren.) While this set benefits from the core four's contributions, their congregation achieves practically the same results, with ringers like **Jorma Kaukonen** ("Sugaree"), **Buddy Miller** ("Deal") and **Yonder Mountain String Band** ("Shakedown Street") breathing new life into the Dead's catalog. The fact that Garcia covered a range of genres opens up further possibilities and, here, songs such as "Shady Grove" and "The Harder They Come" are given added credence by featuring the artists originally associated with the numbers (**David Grisman** and **Jimmy Cliff**, respectively). Whether it's enjoyed through a casual listen in 5.1 surround stereo or experienced by watching the DVD in high definition, *Dear Jerry* is a supreme celebration—a genuine love letter that pays tribute to Jerry's genius.
Lee Zimmerman

Metallica
Hardwired...to Self-Destruct
BLACKENED

Metallica would have to veer pretty far off the rails to disappoint with a new album. The band, now 10 albums deep with *Hardwired...to Self-Destruct*, has rerfected a signature style of grand, accessible metal over the past several decades, and the musicians have never failed to meet the expectations they've set for themselves. It's that consistency that sets Metallica apart from so many of their peers, proving that delivering repeated quality is a skill, not a given. This album is the band's first studio effort since 2008's *Death Magnetic*, and the musicians have enlisted **Greg Fidelman**, who engineered and mixed that prior album, to produce the 12 tracks here. The riffs are heavy, the beats are throbbing and frontman **James Hetfield** sounds as fierce as ever, particularly on surging rocker "Atlas, Rise!" and pointed, growling number "ManUNkind." Metallica doesn't rush through any of the songs, pacing the aggression and grit to ensure that each track gets its musical due. Mid-tempo thumper "Am I Savage?" takes its time to unfold over six and a half minutes, allowing the band to roll through each note with maximum fervor. The closing number, seven-minute "Spit Out the Bone," amps up the vigor, giving drummer **Lars Ulrich** the chance to fully show off before descending into a static-laced ball of electricity that finds a real melody despite its instrumental chaos. These songs, like so many of Metallica's others, are primed for an arena stage. So much so that you can almost see the pyrotechnics going off as you headbang along. ***Emily Zemler***

Animals as Leaders
The Madness of Many SUMERIAN

There is a sense that everything to come will be unexpected as *The Madness of Many*, the new album from **Animals as Leaders**, opens. The first track, "Arithmophobia," runs a bizarre six-minute gamut of musical styles, incorporating everything from metallic guitar riffs and jazzy horn parts into one instrumental soundscape. The rest of the songs follow suit, expanding the possible definitions of the band's musical genre categorization. It's ambitious and continually surprising, although there is a sense that, as dynamic as these tracks are, they will feel more alive onstage than they do on the album. Fast-paced songs like "Backpfeifengesicht" and "The Glass Bridge" reveal the musicians' extreme musical dexterity and ability to switch between tones and genres with seamless precision. It almost seems impossible for fingers to move that quickly across guitar strings. But because the album is lyric-less and the songs are lengthy (or, more lengthy than the average rock number), the boundaries between tracks occasionally blur and it's hard to differentiate one song from another. Maybe that's the point, though. In that way, the record can work as one extensive musical landscape, ever shifting and usually unpredictable. Toward the end of the album, the tempo slows, first on mathy rock number "The Brain Dance" and then on acoustic closer "Apeirophobia." It's an apt way to close the work, carefully easing you out of the complex melodies that came before and offering a soft respite before the silence arrives again.
Emily Zemler

John McEuen
Made in Brooklyn CHESKY

John McEuen established his credence as both an archivist and traditional troubadour 45 years ago when he invited a gathering of country music's living legends to join his group, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, in the studio for what became the groundbreaking *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*. That fusion of old and new Americana helped reset the course of McEuen's 50-year career, not only with the Dirt Band, but also as the inspiration for his occasional solo excursions. Still, *Made in Brooklyn* may be the best example yet of McEuen's reverence for his roots. A revisit to the NGDB classic "Mr. Bojangles" adds new eloquence and insight, while covers of revered standards such as "She Darked the Sun," "I Still Miss Someone," "Acoustic Traveler" and Warren Zevon's "My Dirty Life and Times" meld reverence and resilience in ways that ensure this vintage sound still thrives, even within a contemporary context.
Lee Zimmerman

How to Dress Well
Care WEIRD WORLD/DOMINO

When **Tom Krell** came out with his full-length debut, *Love Remains*, back in 2010, he clear-cut himself a wide sonic space to expand his spectral, lo-fi take on quiet storm R&B. He's come a long way in six years. *Care* is a fully realized collection of songs that taps into all the popular earmarks of modern R&B—crisply programmed beats, occasionally Auto-Tuned vocal lines and the requisite syrupy lyrics. "Count the hours since you left home, counted all night, all night; world's crying on the telephone, telling everyone, 'It's all right, it's all right,'" he sings on "The Ruins." But the uneasy, art-damaged quality of his music has become a well-defined signature that elevates songs like the exquisitely spacey single "Lost Youth/Lost You" far above and beyond pop formula. It's in the crafty,

interlocked guitar and synth lines of the bouncy leadoff track "Can't You Tell" and the hands-in-the-air West African dance-floor feel of "Anxious," with all of it driven by Krell's spot-on falsetto. Until now, he's seemed shy about his voice—a natural cross between a young Justin Timberlake and a well-caffeinated Jamie Lidell—but throughout *Care*, he's front and center, with all the courage and confidence that entails. ***Bill Murphy***

Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad

Make It Better ROOTFIRE COOPERATIVE

If you're a committed roots purist by way of Jamaica, then there's always something vaguely unnerving about the idea of reggae being "rescued" by a bunch of white guys from say, Upstate New York. As it turns out, **Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad** are neither revivalist nor unnerving, in part, because the band's sheer musicianship goes a long way toward dispelling any concerns about their authenticity, and also because, after five albums of songs ranging from alt-country to straight-up rockers-style reggae, they've crafted a sound and a message that's undeniably original. *Make It Better*, which was co-produced by the estimable **Danny Kalb** (known in particular for his work with Ben Harper), advances the mission with slick, wide-angled songs like the UB40-touched "What Kind of World" and "Greatest of Days"—a sun-splashy lover's rock with a Tex-Mex guitar hook that showcases the honey-dripped vocals of bassist **James Searl** and guitarists **Dylan Savage** and **Dan Keller.** Of course, no roots band is worth its salt without a killer rhythm section, and Searl holds up his end with drummer **Chris O'Brian**, especially on the downtempo one-drop skank "Trouble Deep" and the trippy four-on-the-floor groover "Walk Right Talk Right"—one of several tracks where the guest horn section also gets its due. ***Bill Murphy***

MV & EE

Root/Void WOODSIST

MV & EE have *not* abated, dude. Marking their 15th anniversary, **Matt Valentine** and **Erika Elder**'s (approximately) 120th disc worth of heady, spacey, goobally, jammy music, *Root/Void*, might actually be the right place to start for once. Like their beloved Grateful Dead, it's sometimes hard to know how to approach the duo—their albums and CD-Rs and cassettes filled with half-formed songs and fully baked jams, their charms not always immediately obvious. But *Root/Void* gets to the glow instantly, the first drones and tablas and chimes of "Love Lemma > Herb Slang" blowing through like incense before Valentine declares that "love is everyone," John Lennon's "Tomorrow Never Knows" realization turned into a hippie-folk lyric, the shared language of psychedelia as immediately announced common currency. There's even a (relatively) straight indie-pop tune, "Much Obliged," though the swirl of guitars and Valentine's wavy, hazy vocals keep the song from entirely revealing which way is up. Content with lo-fi CD-Rs for much of their output, *Root/Void* contains the whiff of a home production while keeping the riot of electric fuzz ("No $ (Shit Space – It's All About the Coin ¢ /Corn)") and acoustic warping ("Feel Alright") in their own discrete and nice-sounding compartments. Plus, there's the perfectly titled hippie love song, "Yr My Jam." *Root/Void* is the sound of MV & EE's golden road welcoming more travelers. ***Jesse Jarnow***

Ear Crystals BY RICHARD GEHR

The search for other-world audio gems

Bee here now. Does any music sound more solemnly archaic yet oddly futuristic than the humble drone? In the hands (and pedals) of Chicago harmonium maestro **Jaime Fennelly**, whose latest "Mind Over Mirrors" album is *Undying Color* (Paradise of Bachelors), the drone represents the earthy fundament from which all nature springs and recycles, world without end. Fennelly most fully exploits the technique's timelessness in "Gravity Wake," a 12-minute masterpiece of buzzing, breathing consciousness expansion with a medieval tinge.

Mass hysteria. Drummer **Bobby Previte** definitely wants to get medieval on your nether regions with *Mass* (RareNoise). **Reed Mathis** (bass), **Marco Benevento** (pipe organ) and four electric guitarists (including Sunn O)))'s **Stephen O'Malley)** cross-pollinate 15th-century composer Guillaume Dufay's *Missa Sancti Jacobi* (as sung by the 11-piece **Rose Ensemble**) with heavy-metal mayhem over the course of a steadily building 69 minutes of sanctified thrash suitable for both cathedrals and arenas.

Contorted. "I've got esoteric tastes that are wasted on the masses," boasts **James Chance** in the title track of *The Flesh Is Weak* (True Groove). A remarkably faithful return to the defiantly hysterical post-punk funk of the 63-year-old's late-'70s bands, *Flesh* again blends frenzied James Brown-ian grooves, a deceptively loose Fela Kuti-like facility on saxophone and Farfisa organ, and the distilled skronk of New York's storied Downtown music scene into a manically danceable mess. "Disciplinary Action" suggests that Chance isn't kidding when he screams, "*Hit me!*" and his Gil Scott-Heron, Frank Sinatra and Ben E. King covers neatly triangulate where this unique outsider's coming from.

Headphones and ozone. Former Zappa guitarist **Mike Keneally** has stealthily been making some of the best music of any progressive rocker's career, both onstage with power trio Beer for Dolphins and on his own. *Scambot 2* (Exowax) inhabits the same fantasy world as its predecessor, giving Keneally leeway to combine ambiguous lyrics with densely layered arrangements (Umphrey's McGee drummer **Kris Myers** motivates several tracks) that warp time, space and harmony, while constantly playing tricks with your ears. *Scambot*'s influences include Zappa (natch), Coltrane, Neil Young, Gentle Giant and various flavors of death metal, but it's ultimately a thing of complex, personal and emotionally resonant beauty, which I recommend highly.

Keeping it greasy. **Frank Zappa** left a Fort Worth's worth of musical gold behind, and the Zappa Family Trust's latest releases reflect FZ's three main musical personas. *Meat Light* contains a remastered and augmented version of *Uncle Meat*, **The Mothers of Invention**'s 1969 double-album overload of surreal doo-wop, fragmentary electronic experiments, Laurel Canyon sociology and brutalist onstage intensity. *Little Dots* captures the 10-piece, horn-driven jazz-rock ensemble Zappa called the "Petit Wazoo" on tour in 1972, when he thought it might be fun to test the improvisational limits of some of LA's finest studio players. And *Chicago '78* is a beautifully recorded double-disc document of one of Zappa's better rock lineups playing some of his more, er, problematic material. Don't cringe your way through "Bamboozled by Love" and "Yo Mama," simply skip to the solos.

CCM Jazz Orchestra featuring Fareed Haque

In Search of Garaj Mahal

HARMONIZED

During their 11 years as a band, ending in 2011, Garaj Mahal thrilled jazz and jamband audiences alike with a blend of fleet-fingered fusion that also incorporated bits of world music and heady prog-rock (minus the pretensions). The quartet's complex, quick-shifting music was often played at breakneck tempos and spiked with virtuosic solo displays. In some respects, the group's repertoire was a natural for adaption to the big-band format, a feat handily accomplished by Cincinnati's **CCM Jazz Orchestra**, under the direction of **Scott Belck**, and the smaller **CCM Jazz Lab Band**, with Garaj Mahal guitarist **Fareed Haque** guesting on all eight tracks. These pieces—all but one written by Haque or Garaj Mahal bassist Kai Eckhardt—certainly carry the sonic imprint of their old band. But the music is suitably eclectic, with "Chester the Pester" offering textures like brass choir sounds and waterfalling horns that feel cinematic, along with funky guitar fueling "The Shadow" and bluesy tones coloring "Hindi Gumbo." "Uneven Mantra" gets its kicks from 7/4 passages and rolling tabla drums, while Haque turns in one of his most impressive solos over the relaxed groove of "A Fur Peace" and volleys the lilting melody of "Witchdoctor" with the brass and reeds. These ambitious arrangements are played with great élan and intensity. ***Philip Booth***

Brownout

Brownout Presents Brown Sabbath Vol. II UBIQUITY

Who knew that Latin-funk versions of Black Sabbath tunes would be so popular? No doubt the success of the first volume of *Brown Sabbath* was a surprise to **Brownout**, the eight-piece Grupo Fantasma spinoff responsible for this twisted concept. Far be it for them to pass up a good opportunity, thus *Brown Sabbath Vol. II* gives us eight more percussion-and-horn-driven interpretations of the legendary metal godfathers' music. Sounding more confident and road-tested than the first time around, this collection leans heavier than its predecessor, to the distinct benefit of the end result. The pulse emphasized by the large-band arrangements is still there, but where the first volume felt like a funk band playing through metal charts (in the best way possible), this time around feels more like Brownout wholeheartedly embracing their inner headbangers. The guitars are louder, the drums hit harder, and even the selection of tunes leans more toward the higher-tempo end of Sabbath's repertoire. Part of what always made Sabbath unique among their metal brethren was the inherent swing in their music, which makes it perfect for being subdivided by congas and shakers and punctuated by horn blasts. If you weren't already familiar with the songs, then you might (correctly) think that Brownout is simply a super-heavy funk outfit; and for those who know the band well enough to have a preference between the Ozzy and Dio eras, the explosive takes on "Fairies Wear Boots" and "Sweet Leaf" are revelations. ***Wayan Zoey***

David Bromberg Band

The Blues, the Whole Blues and Nothing But the Blues RED HOUSE

You wouldn't call **David Bromberg** a blues artist per se—he's always assimilated to numerous genres—but since day one of his career, the blues have never been further than a lurk away. *The Blues, the Whole Blues and Nothing But the Blues* is an album Bromberg's had in him for so long that it's only remarkable it took four decades for him to make it. On this **Larry Campbell**-produced collection, Bromberg—splitting his time between electric and acoustic guitars, and joined by a peerless team of players—has his way with music originated by the likes of Robert Johnson and Sonny Boy Williamson but also reaches beyond the obvious contenders. John Willie Henry's "You've Been a Good Ole Wagon" builds on a whimsy endemic to much of Bromberg's work, and Bobby Charles' "Why Are People Like That?" is all New Orleans sass and brass. At the other extreme, when Bromberg takes on Ray Charles' "A Fool for You" solo—just voice and guitar—he has never sounded as open or as pure, and for the traditional "Delia," he and Campbell keep it to the basics—just the two of them—the latter jabbing with jagged slide licks. The title track and a couple of Bromberg originals, sequenced together at the end, send a triple-punch reminder on the way out that Bromberg is a hell of a bandleader as well as a nonpareil musician. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

The Mavericks

All Night Live Volume 1

MONO MUNDO/THIRTY TIGERS

Following **The Mavericks'** decision to regroup in 2012 after a bitter breakup eight years earlier, the band's recent success has

Metallica

nearly eclipsed their accomplishments the first time around. For one thing, the record industry is no longer concerned with the division between country music that pushes at its parameters and the more traditional sounds found in the musical mainstream. For another, The Mavericks have furthered their own stellar reputation as a result of both their recent recordings and their exceptional live shows. *All Night Live Volume 1* offers an apt summation of the band's progress to date, culling selections that are mostly from more recent albums in an attempt to replicate the energy and excitement of a Mavericks performance. Anyone who's seen their shows can attest to the fact that those elements are hard to capture on record, mainly because they're such a visual ensemble. Nevertheless, the standout selections—"All Night Long," "Back in Your Arms Again," "Dance in the Moonlight" and a tender cover of Neil Young's "Harvest Moon"—shine a spotlight on the band at their best, while offering further proof of some exceptional prowess. Easily among America's best live outfits, their combination of classic country, rock and Latin influences results in the exuberance evidenced here. A sampler of sorts, it also elevates anticipation for the inevitable *Volume 2*. ***Lee Zimmerman***

The Congress

The Game AMERICAN PARADOX

It's surprisingly refreshing in this day for a country-tinged Southern rock album to not sound like it was recorded in a barn with everyone crowded around one microphone. And that's only the first burst of fresh air on *The Game*, the sophomore release from Richmond, Va.-based quartet **The Congress**. Full of left turns and mood swings—and anchored by a thick, rumbling rhythm section—*The Game* is a strong step forward for the relatively young band. Expert mixing by Avers' **Adrian Olsen** helps emphasize the modern sonic take on the band's mountain music, which balances well against its traditional compositional roots. The tunes contain numerous surprises, from the more obvious short-attention-span garage-rock bent of "New Amsterdam" to the Grateful Dead-esque twists of "This Ain't Livin'," which creates a pleasant dichotomy between gently soothing and demanding attention. All the musicians have space to stretch out, but that's most apparent in **Scott Lane**'s soaring guitar work. The rest of the band more than keeps up though, filling the available frequencies with strong, solid piano, bass and drums. At times, the band sticks a little too close to their musical touchstones, most noticeably the music of The Band, but it's still early in The Congress' career. No doubt as they continue to mature, they'll refine their already deep sound into something uniquely their own. ***Wayan Zoey***

Kaiser Chiefs

Stay Together CAROLINE

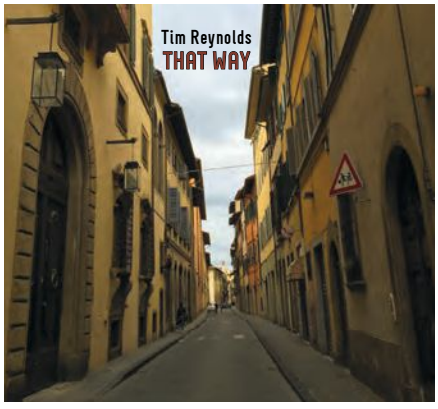
It's been over 10 years since **Kaiser Chiefs** blew onto the scene as part of the post-punk British revival with their raucous debut, *Employment*. Since then, the Leeds band has unveiled four subsequent

1 Tim Reynolds

"A Tangled Web We Weave"
From the album *That Way*
Beam on Music

Guitar sorcerer Tim Reynolds lets his six-and 12-string guitars do the talking on his new acoustic CD, "That Way." Unveiling 14 original tunes, Reynolds' musical pace varies from gentle fingerpicking to furiously fast and vibrant to soaring. Tim's precision and mastery shine at every complex corner.

www.timreynolds.com



2 Mammal Dap

"I Want 2 Be Ur Friend"
From the album *Deep Field*
Self-released

Mammal Dap is adventurous, psych-fusion from Northampton, Mass., comprised of Killian Karlsson, Zack Cross, Reed Sutherland and Colin Jalbert. Together, they interweave hypnotic beats with pumping bass, lush pads and soaring hooks. Balancing a deep love of nostalgic tones with a digital-age sensibility, their sound evokes the aesthetics of Bonobo, Flying Lotus and Tycho.

www.mammaldap.com

3 Editor's Pick: Cass McCombs

"Rancid Girl"
From the album *Mangy Love*
Anti-

Over the past decade, Cass McCombs has established himself as one of our premier songwriters. It's a career that has twisted and turned, from style to subject—diverse, cryptic, vital and refreshingly rebellious. Mangy Love is McCombs at his most blunt: tackling sociopolitical issues through his uniquely cracked lens of lyrical wit and singular insight.

www.cassmccombs.com

4 Pegi Young & The Survivors

"Trying to Live My Live Without You"
From the album *Raw*
Baltimore Thrush Records

RAW is Pegi Young's fifth album overall, written in the wake of her 2014 divorce from Neil Young after 37 years of marriage. Co-written with Muscle Shoals legends Spooner Oldham and Kelvyn Holly, it features a cast of veterans who add soulful muscle to the sonic texture. RAW is out 2/17/17.

www.pegiyoung.com

5 Jimmy Lumpkin and the Revival

"Every Time I Leave"
From the album *Home*
Skate Mountain Records

Jimmy Lumpkin's sound is a rock-and-soul brew from the backwoods of Alabama, combining a deep sense of spirit with an unmistakable groove. The band's new album Home is out in early 2017, the first release from Alabama-based Skate Mountain Records. Visit JLandtheRev.com for more info.

www.skatemountain.com

6 Greg Harrison Band

"Deliverance"
From the album *As Long as We're Dancin'*
Self-released

Greg Harrison's near-death experience was enough to convince him that music was the best medicine for his soul. He played solo shows all over and slowly pieced together a band. John Bonnett, Zack Lilley and Samuel Nesbitt decided to join the ride, and they have been making people dance ever since!

www.gregharrisonband.com

7 The Intangibles

"The Religion Club"
From the album *I Woke Up in the Future*
Self-released

"This New York City trio treads between furrowed prog-rock intensity and accessible pop songcraft, and I Woke Up in the Future is a near-perfect blend of both." It's a prog-a-delic album epic that could have stepped out of a 1970s classic-rock time warp. Free album download available.

www.intangiblesny.com

8 The Travelin' Kine

"Change in the Wind"
From the album *Change in the Wind*
Self-Released

The Travelin' Kine has logged serious miles honing their sound: a mix of potent songwriting and fiery country chops, doused with a few shots of whiskey. The band delivers a musical message of hellfire and heartbreak, leaving it all on the stage at every performance.

www.thetravelinkine.com

9 JamOFF! Winner: Valerie Barrymore

"Who's Got My Back"
From the album *Who's Got My Back*
Self-released

Valerie Barrymore, aka "Queen of Funk" some say, is a powerful, high-energy vocalist and writer. Valerie is also a Detroit Music Award and Detroit Black Music Award winner for Best Funk Artist. Born and raised in Detroit, after college, Valerie's first real gig took her to Tokyo!

www.valeriebarrymore.net

albums, each veering slightly away from its predecessor. Now, on their sixth effort, the musicians are still interested in boisterous, swaggering rock numbers, but that interest manifests itself much differently. Opener "We Stay Together" has a bluesy, gospel swing, while "Good Clean Fun" drops the tempo to a breezy pace, letting frontman **Ricky Wilson** leisurely croon. Single "Hole in My Soul," which was produced by **Brian Higgins** (Pet Shop Boys, New Order), has a throwback New Wave aesthetic, but lacks some of the punch of the band's past singles. *Stay Together* is engaging, mostly, but the young brashness of Kaiser Chiefs' early efforts has been glossed over a bit, occasionally to the detriment of the music. Evolution can be both inevitable and exciting, but this album sometimes feels like it doesn't know quite where to go next, or maybe that it doesn't care where it's going at all. Kaiser Chiefs sound grown up, but should being grown up sound this aimless? ***Emily Zemler***

Tove Lo

Lady Wood ISLAND

Lady Wood, **Tove Lo**'s second album, follows the Swedish artist's 2014 debut, *Queen of the Clouds*, which went platinum and garnered her a heft of buzz. The new album falls into two chapters, "Fairy Dust" and "Fire Fade," each of which revels in its own stylistic and emotional tones. "Influence," a pulsating pop number that features **Wiz Khalifa**, opens the first chapter, lending an aura of purposeful anticipation to the album. "Cool Girl," the disc's flagship single, follows suit, underscoring the singer's evocative croon with a hypnotic beat. There's a propulsive sense of motion to these early tracks, leading the listener into the second chapter, which commences with "Don't Talk About It," a surging number that feels like the climax to all that building expectation. "Flashes" is a massive ballad, carrying Tove Lo's voice to epic heights, but it's on "Keep It Simple" that she really lets loose and unveils her emotive urgency. There is a sense of controlled chaos to the latter half of the album, as though the singer is ready to unleash whatever emotions she was holding back on the first part. That arc gives the album the sense of a journey, carrying the listener along with Tove Lo through each track. It's a compelling listen, especially when taken in as a whole, and will only add to the musician's already loud buzz. ***Emily Zemler***

Paper Bird

Paper Bird

SONS OF THUNDER/THIRTY TIGERS

Denver's **Paper Bird** bears a certain kinship to other Colorado combos, particularly those that strive for populist appeal. Now, with new vocalist **Carleigh Aikins** helping out at the helm, the band takes on an extra edge, evidenced by a clear sonic shift that finds them completely revamping their sound. Indeed, their latest effort, the eponymous *Paper Bird*, finds electric guitars and amped-up instrumentation usurping the laid-back, folk-infused sound that they favored in the past. That's especially evident in sturdier fare like "I Don't Mind" and the sultry-sounding "Sunday," the latter

The Get Right Band

of which meshes graceful harmonies, reminiscent of the Dixie Chicks and the Be Good Tanyas, with the '70s sensibilities of bands like Heart and Fleetwood Mac. Aikins enhances a vocal arsenal powered by lead fellow singers **Sarah Anderson** and **Genevieve Patterson**—all of whom blend their voices so seamlessly that they practically sound like one. The instrumental duties are divvied up as well, creating a homespun sound that never lacks vitality or verve. In many ways, Paper Bird is the ideal communal combo, one that allows each member to contribute to the proceedings without detracting from the group's common core. That shared dedication helps *Paper Bird* take flight. ***Lee Zimmerman***

Oren Ambarchi

Hubris EDITIONS MEGO

This music can evoke a grid or a web of steady pulsation—constant 16th notes with subtle accents, distortions in-between articulations, background drones, stresses and omissions creating a larger pattern within the small-bore details. There's a lot of delicate, restrained and high-concept guitar work here. **Jim O'Rourke, Arto Lindsay** and others join **Oren Ambarchi** to realize this dense and satisfying project, which ultimately sounds more like a percussion ensemble than a string-centric outing. The first track, the 21-minute "Hubris, Pt. 1," is said to have connections to Wang Chung's soundtrack to William Friedkin's film *To Live and Die in L.A.*, though one might be hard-pressed to make the connection unassisted. The effect is something like those huge Chuck Close portraits that have hundreds of tiny cells, each with its own swirl of color and contrast, but which work together to make an almost photographic image of a face from a distance. It is difficult to tell what representation one might walk away with when standing back from this music, but it benefits from a little reflective distance. Tick-tocking quarter notes emerge and

Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad

offbeat patterns start to push to the front, as the two main longer tracks are sandwiched by the under-two-minute "Hubris, Pt. 2." The overall effect is one of Krautrock new-age minimalism with touches of film-score atmospherics. Despite all of that, there's a real sense of motion and dislocation, like the blur and glare of two trains passing in opposite directions at night. ***John Adamian***

The Get Right Band

Who's in Charge? SELF-RELEASED

As they have proved during the choice festival sets they've earned, **The Get Right Band** are capable of veering from rock to reggae with occasional detours toward funk and blues with ease. It's little wonder things feel uncommonly easy and assured: Guitarist/vocalist **Silas Durocher** and bassist **Jesse Gentry** have played together since middle school, and with drummer **Jian-Claude Mears** setting the pace, their ability to vary the tempo seems like second nature. Nevertheless, the album's best melodies are those left for the end of the set, particularly as applied to "Heartbreak Kid," "Write This Song for You" and "If I Forget," all of which allow the band's sentimental side to shine through. Consider The Get Right Band a perfect party band, well suited for any occasion where maintaining the right vibe is of prime importance. ***Lee Zimmerman***

The Way Down Wanderers

The Way Down Wanderers

SELF-RELEASED

Credit **The Way Down Wanderers** with giving a nod toward tradition and having the gumption to break the mold. While they take their cues from bluegrass and other Americana influences, the melodies

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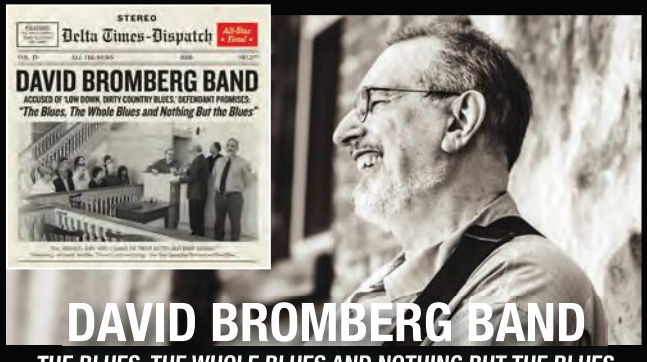

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Reviews

that dominate this self-titled effort vary substantially rather than being bound to any one style specifically. Yes, there are a few spontaneous jams that spotlight both their frenzy and finesse, but the emphasis mostly remains on the more tuneful fare, a solid and sturdy sound that ensures the listener receives genuine engagement and compelling content as well. Opening track "Dead Birds" sets an upbeat and effusive pace that's maintained throughout. "Blacktop Highway" may someday take its place alongside other rugged road songs like "Willin'," "Ramblin' Man" and "White Line Fever." Indeed, there isn't a shortage of memorable melodies, including "Heading North," "Circles" and "Hollow Man"—songs that are as compelling as they are convincing. It suggests that the band actually emerged fully formed, possessing a certain savvy that assures their ability to stand apart in a crowded field of nu-grass contenders. It also assumes that while The Way Down Wanderers may have only just begun their musical journey, they've come quite far already. ***Lee Zimmerman***

July Talk

Touch SLEEPLESS/ISLAND

As dueling lead throats for Toronto rockers **July Talk**, **Peter Dreimanis** and **Leah Fay** often recall the oddball chemistry of The Kills' Jamie Hince and Alison Mosshart—and, in fact, the band's angular sound draws liberally from the same scuzz-caked blueprint. But it's in songs like the mutant disco single "Push + Pull" and the electro-creepy "Now I Know" where the band really finds an identity: a sweaty urgency to dig into the dark, twisted mysteries of relationships, with music that mirrors the struggle in spiky, seductive and unruly fashion. *Touch* is ultra-hip in its channeling of modern impulses, from the synth washes that fill the chorus of the otherwise bedroom-quiet "Strange Habit" to the punky staccato guitars of "Jesus Said So," while Dreimanis conjures a gargled-glass Tom Waits persona that offsets Fay's crisp, breathy tenor to jarring effect. (The rollicking "Lola + Joseph" is a standout, augmented by a layered baritone sax line worthy of vintage Morphine.) It's only the band's second album, but they sound like shrewd and seasoned vets in the making. ***Bill Murphy***

The xx

I See You YOUNG TURKS

"I have been a romantic for so long," **Romy Madley Croft** sings on "I Dare You," a post-R&B anthem from **The xx**'s third LP. But she changes gears a few lines later, boasting, "I'm on a different kind of high." Both statements ring true on the hypnotic *See You*, the London trio's first album in five years, which balances their trademark broken-heart minimalism with lush, experimental soundscapes. The MVP here is keyboardist-producer **Jamie xx**, who laces these tracks with startling, ever-shifting surprises. Opener "Dangerous" signals the evolution afoot, as xx weaves sampled trumpet blasts into the bass-heavy dubstep groove—anchored, as always, by the tag-team vocals of guitarist Croft and bassist **Oliver Sim**. "Performance," an otherwise standard xx ballad, surges with organic orchestral heft; "Test Me" borders on shoegazing with its eerie, reversed vocals and theremin-like tones. Jamie xx, perhaps reflecting his recent work with pop stars like Drake and Alicia Keys, also brings refreshing levity to his beats: propelling "I Dare You" with handclaps, swerving "On Hold" into melted hip-hop samples. With Croft and Sim still crooning like lost 1990s R&B stars, the band never strays too far from the catharsis of their previous work—they've just tweaked the recipe enough to avoid growing stale. ***Ryan Reed***

July Talk

HEADY FRIENDS

Foxygen

Hang JAGJAGUWAR

Are **Jonathan Rado** and **Sam France** two irreverent hipsters bullshitting their way through the annals of pop-rock history on their record company's dime? Or are they gleeful sonic voyagers with a flair for the eccentric? With *Hang*, their absurdly over-the-top third album, the answer seems to be both. Last time out, they stitched together an double-LP of stoned genre work-outs, loosely centered around a fictional band. But that mess sounds tidy compared to *Hang*: Utilizing every squeak and squelch of a ramshackle 40-piece orchestra, the duo indulge in swing ("Avalon"), cornball soft-rock ("Follow the Leader"), smooth-jazz guitar solos, and what can only be described as "lounge-prog" ("America"), calling to mind everyone from David Bowie to *SMiLE*-era Brian Wilson to a coked-out Poco to your favorite cruise ship piano player. France croons every surreal lyric in his standard son-of-Jagger mode, adopting an obnoxiously wide vibrato. Meanwhile, the overstuffed arrangements bubble with sonic surprises: chipmunk backing vocals, xylophones, circus organs, harpsichords, violins and probably the most goddamn tuba ever employed on a rock album. But then again, maybe Foxygen have abandoned "rock" altogether with *Hang*—quite an accomplishment, even if you're annoyed by their brand of madness. Where will they go from here: A black-metal album? A country-rap single? Nobody knows, and that's half the fun.

Ryan Reed

The Flaming Lips

Oczy Mlody WARNER BROS.

On 2013's *The Terror*, **The Flaming Lips** funneled dark, personal subject matter—**Wayne Coyne**'s recent divorce, **Steven Drozd**'s brief drug relapse—into skeletal electronic ambience, downplaying the psychedelic uplift of their best music. They've veered back toward their sonic sweet spot with *Oczy Mlody*, a whirlwind of Krautrock synthesizers, programmed hip-hop drums, and lush space-pop production that nods toward their back-to-back masterpieces *The Soft Bulletin* and *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*. Having successfully exorcised his demons on *The Terror*, Coyne drew inspiration from the weirdest possible place: a Polish book full of phonetically vivid phrases ("Do Glowy," "Nigdy Nie") that he often leafed through in the recording studio. The singer was particularly struck by one: "Oczy Mlody," which he interpreted as "Oxy Melody," a futuristic drug. The album sounds like that description reads, with Coyne and Drozd, the band's multi-instrumentalist mastermind, burrowing into the trippiest corners of their imagination. "White trash rednecks/ Earthworms eat the ground," Coyne croons on "How??," a lullaby built on hypnotic keys and buzzsaw bass. And that's somehow not the kookiest lyric here: On "There Should Be Unicorns," he envisions a decadent sci-fi party full of "day-glo strippers" and "edible butterflies we put ketchup on." But *Oczy Mlody* grows more intimate the longer it plays: "The Castle" is a twinkling electro-pop rumination on a friend's suicide—only filtered through a fairy-tale prism. "The castle can never be rebuilt again," Coyne sings, expertly blurring the euphoric and the tragic. ***Ryan Reed***

Arkells

Morning Report LAST GANG

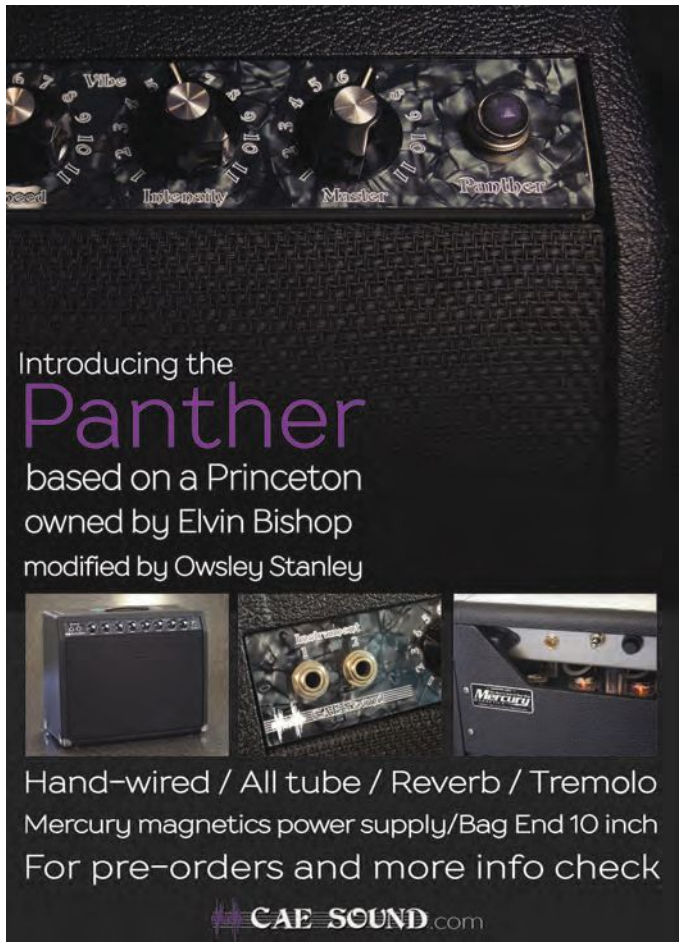
There's good reason why Canada's **Arkells** have garnered impressive kudos back home. They've fine-tuned a modern-rock sound tailor-made for commercial consumption—trendy but not tiresome in ways that might short circuit invention. Nevertheless, *Morning Report* suggests that they're also not above tapping into a certain trendiness, as evidenced by the infusion of rap and hip-hop in very limited doses. Fortunately, they still retain their anthemic edge, especially as it applies to songs like "My Heart's Always Yours," "Hung Up," "Come Back Home," "A Little Rain (A Song for Pete)" and "And Then Some," all of which strive to soar. Sing-along choruses add immediate impact, reaffirming the majesty of the music and the assurance that air guitars will be strummed in unison. The sound is daring to a degree, further indication that Arkells are willing to push their parameters and challenge their listeners and themselves as well.

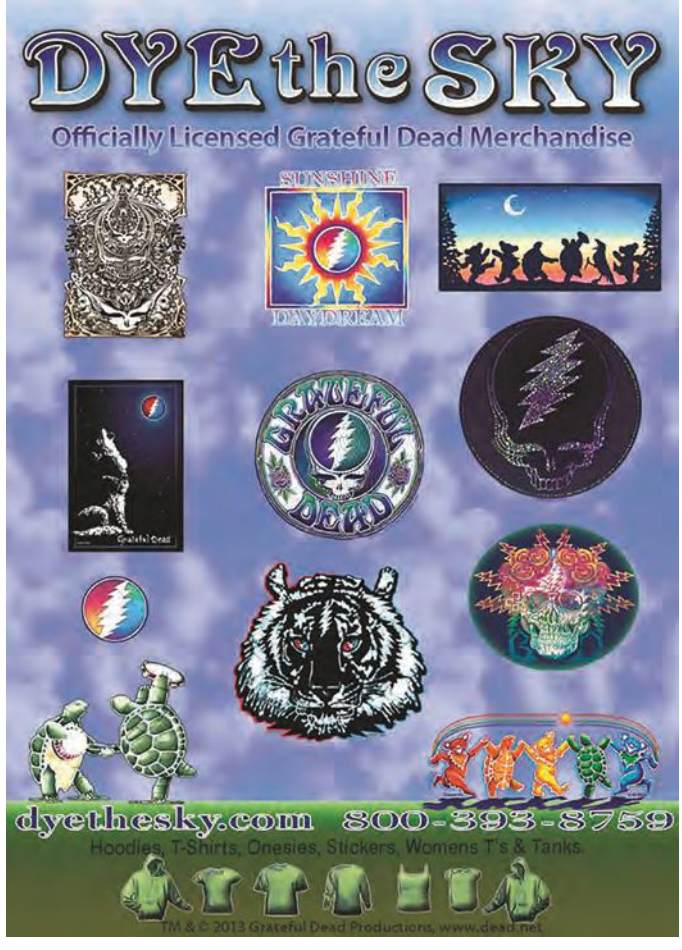
Lee Zimmerman

Lustmord

Dark Matter TOUCH

Good ambient music always has a tinge of darkness, with a sinister touch to balance any excess mellowness. But **Lustmord** has been credited with creating the genre known as "dark ambient," which generally turns up the ominousness a few notches. This album was crafted using sounds derived from a library of cosmological activity—interstellar plasma, pulsars, charged particle interactions, radiation, emissions, cosmic jets and other astrophysical phenomena, some of which exist in the range of human hearing and some of which have been adjusted to be audible to us. The final effect is like putting your ear up to the opening of a conch shell the size of the cosmos. Organized into swells, with a tidal rhythm, high-pitch whale-like sounds poke through the darkness like the beam of some bioluminescent mutant fish in the ocean's depths. Molten lava, windswept lunar landscapes, white dwarf implosions, solar eruptions, rolling galactic storms and immense

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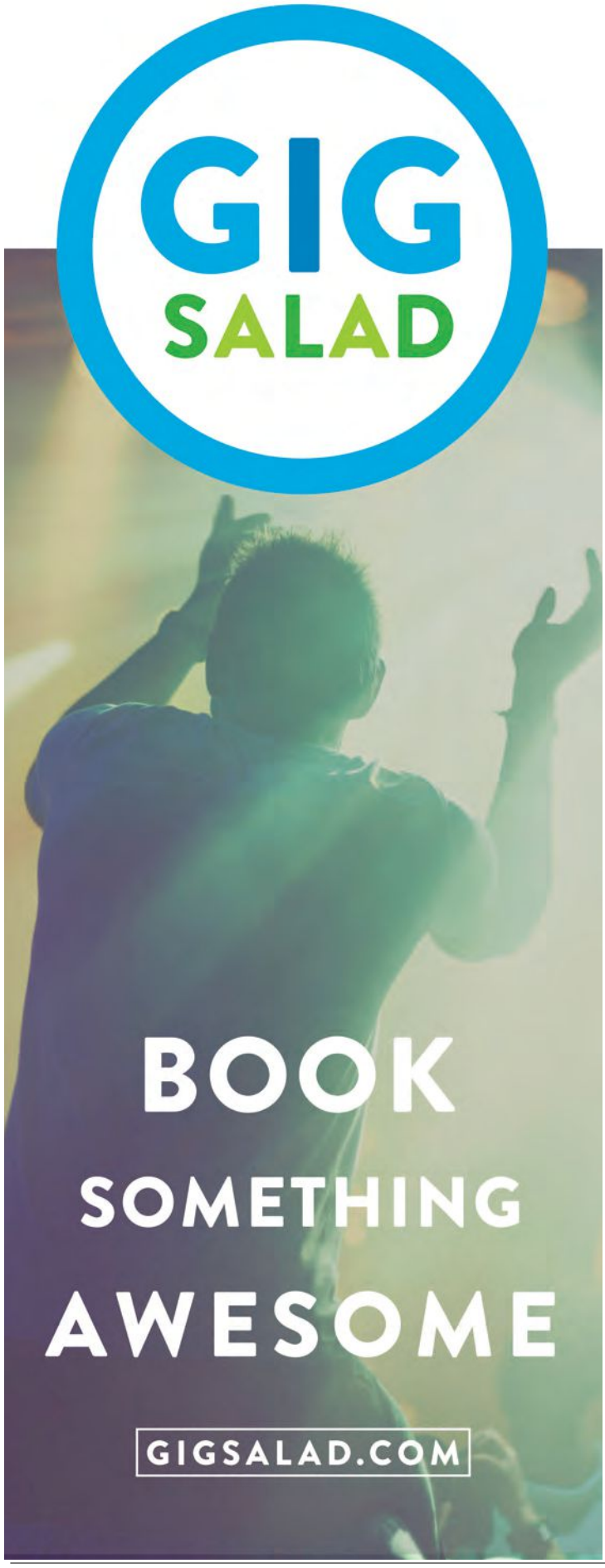


Reviews

Pete Doherty

emptiness are conjured by the sounds on *Dark Matter*. Lustmord has said that part of the idea of this music is to draw attention to the unfathomable vastness of the cosmos, and it succeeds on that level, suggesting our relative insignificance in stretches of time and space that our minds can't even grasp. Your reaction to this record will depend on your response to feeling like your life has an inconsequential microscopic stature—is it an experience of mystical transcendence or of soul-crushing anxiety? ***John Adamian***

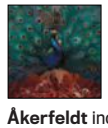
ARJUN

Gravity PHEROMONE

It would be misleading to call **ARJUN** either a power trio or a jazz-fusion outfit, although they draw liberally from both disciplines. Improvisation is at the core of their approach, and the eight jams that comprise the **Scotty Hard**-produced *Gravity* are indeed weighty and, at times, dense, but to box them in would be to shortchange them. For one thing, melody rides atop everything they play. Even in the thick of their most complex, groupthink moves, **Eddie Arjan Peters** (guitar), **Andre Lyles** (bass) and **Lamar Myers** (drums) lock in to a groove and work it to the bone and something memorably hummable is never far away. "Prince," the funk-fest of an opener, spotlights Peters at his most lyrical, slipping seamlessly from tempo to tempo and gliding across time signatures, without ever losing sight of the root of the song. Myers, when called upon, is all about precision timekeeping but then, before you even know he's done it, he slips into a freewheeling rhythm that swings so gently and coolly, and alters the mood so subtly. And Lyles is the tether, holding the bottom when required and driving when he can. (He's a monster on the successive "Crossroad" and "Endless Again.") There are noteworthy guests: **Jeff Coffin**'s flute gives the already soaring "Run" even more of an orchestral grandeur than it was born with, and **Cory Henry** (Snarky Puppy) lends organ fills to "Ascent" that simultaneously suggest Traffic at their peak and a move into classic soul territory that they'd be wise to explore further. For three guys, ARJUN makes some pretty colossal statements on *Gravity*. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

OPETH

Sorceress NUCLEAR BLAST



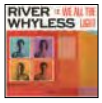
OPETH have always operated under the progressive rock umbrella, but frontman/mastermind **Mikael Åkerfeldt** inched toward a full-blown symphonic-prog style with 2011's *Heritage*—embracing influences like Jethro Tull and Camel, and abandoning the doom-laden death-metal bellows of his early work. It's a risky move that continues to piss off roughly half the band's fanbase, and with *Sorceress*, a song cycle that's equal parts ethereal and explosive, these Swedish overlords culminate a trilogy of albums searching for independence. There are nods to their obvious influences, from the song titles (brooding epic "The Wilde Flowers" alludes to the formative Canterbury band) to the Bach quote that opens the acoustic section of "A Fleeting Glance." But, overall, Åkerfeldt builds on the band's standard dynamic—complex riffing buoyed by pastoral sweetness—in a way that feels more their own than

ever before. *Sorceress* is a seamless smorgasbord of styles and settings: "Will O the Wisp" weaves fingerpicked guitars, Mellotron flutes and jazzy drums, climaxing with a Pink Floyd-styled guitar solo; "The Seventh Sojourn" pairs eerie, Indian strings with booming hand drums, dissolving in the last minute for a respite of piano and ghostly vocal harmonies. Perhaps the most revealing moment is "Sorceress 2," an acoustic ballad so wispy and vulnerable that you can practically hear early fans gagging. May Åkerfeldt continue to follow his proggy muse wherever it takes him.
Ryan Reed

Peter Doherty
Hamburg Demonstrations
BMG/CLOUDS HILL

It's impossible to listen to **Peter Doherty**'s new solo album without considering his tumultuous public life. The artist's prior work with The Libertines and Babyshambles has often overshadowed his solo efforts, the last of which arrived in 2009. It isn't a secret that Doherty is an extremely self-indulgent musician—both on and off the stage—and he tends to make music that is seriously about himself. *Hamburg Demonstrations*, recorded in the German city because of its history in developing The Beatles' career, was laid down to tape, so there's a raw, live feeling to the songs. The tracks are essentially acoustic garage-rock, with Doherty's croon and lyrical tongue-twisting taking precedence. Some of it sounds like it's being written on the spot, especially "Down for the Outing," which comes apart once Doherty stops singing. Being a fan of Doherty's music means being willing to accept his drug-addled, self-involved persona, and sometimes it can be hard not to be annoyed by how much of an artistic genius he clearly thinks he is. "A Spy in the House of Love" opens with an unnecessary 30-plus seconds of typewriter clicking and fails to ever materialize as a complete song as Doherty moans the same lines over and over. There isn't a real melody, only roughshod instrumentals and the singer's obviously improvised lines. At the end of the number, he interrupts the recording and says, "It's not happening." There are some musicians we listen to because they are interesting—you just want to see what they'll do—not because they necessarily produce amazing work every time. This is one of those instances.
Emily Zemler

River Whyless
We All the Light SELF-RELEASED



River Whyless emit a kind of hypnotic sensibility, one that's so unerringly distinct it could have been birthed during the psychedelic '60s or connected to some Far Eastern mantra and mystique. There's not a sitar in sight, but the band's meditative melodies and supple strings convey a Zen-like sound that transcends any supposed nu-folk designs. Band members **Ryan O'Keefe** (guitar/ vocals), **Halli Anderson** (violin/ vocals), **Alex McWalters** (drums) and **Daniel Shearin** (bass/ harmonium/cello/ banjo/vocals) convey an unceasingly mellow musical perspective, one that relies on a more cerebral style as opposed to instant engagement. Songs such as "Baby Brother," "Falling Son" and "We All Deserve the Light" induce a quiet and calming state of bliss, with added brass and strings enhancing the eerie ambience. That unusual, understated approach is generally hinted at in the song titles themselves, with "Bend Time," "Sailing Away," "Blood Moon" and "We All Deserve the Light" affirming a feeling of peaceful repose—a calming effect that's decidedly out of sync with the cacophony of modern times. Given that the group hails from the idyllic environs of Asheville, N.C., the tranquility isn't entirely surprising, but the way that they transmit that aural imagery seems almost effortless as well. Two albums on, River Whyless have established a most peaceful template, a blend of soul and serenity that connects shadows with light.
Lee Zimmerman

Various Artists
The Musical Mojo of Dr. John: Celebrating Mac and His Music
CONCORD

Session man, soul man, voodoo priest or traditional tunesmith, the tireless **Mac Rebennack**, aka **Dr. John**, has become an enduring icon over the course of his 50-plus-year career. Fittingly then, this expansive all-star tribute, recorded in May 2014 in New Orleans—his place of origin and inspiration—encompasses a considerable amount of history. Given his transformation into a jazz and blues purist in the early '80s, the amount of material—original and otherwise—is impressive, occasionally eclipsing even the artist himself. After all, he's not the only performer who has ever laid claim to standards such as "Goodnight Irene," "Stack-A-Lee" or "Since I Fell for You." Nevertheless, it's Rebennack's wider repertoire that's celebrated here, and with special guests like **Bruce Springsteen**, **John Fogerty**, **The Neville Brothers**, **Irma Thomas**, **Allen Toussaint**, **Mavis Staples**, **Jason Isbell** and others taking turns as the hired hands, the sheer range of that stylistic spread becomes quite apparent. However, sometimes the celebrants themselves threaten to overshadow their guest of honor, making him seem like only an ancillary player in the proceedings, not the one situated in the spotlight. No matter that his signature songs—"Right Place Wrong Time," "I Walk on Guilded Splinters," "Such a Night" and the like are still the standout selections. Happily, he's allowed to wrap up the festivities with the final three songs, affirming the fact that he is, after all, the true star of the show. It's hardly the perfect prescription, but fortunately the Doctor still gets his due.
Lee Zimmerman

Lambchop
For Love Often Turns Us Still (FLOTUS) MERGE

Evolving and rotating around songwriter **Kurt Wagner** over the past 30 years, Nashville's **Lambchop** find whole new magical ways to be Lambchop on *For Love Often Turns Us Still*, otherwise known as *FLOTUS*, one of the 2016's most beautiful albums. With humanistic playfulness intact and singular hyper-articulated delivery present, Wagner spends the entire album processing his voice through a vocoder and mixing human and electronic beats. The result is an record that makes Lambchop sound even less like anybody else than ever before. With the vocoder, Wagner's voice becomes an even more beautiful instrument, reaching for soulful falsetto amid chopped vocal samples ("Directions to the Can"), speak-singing ("Writer"), and uncovering new spectrums of evocative and wordless coos ("Relatives #2"). But what makes the new, weird Lambchop special is the old, weird Lambchop, especially **Tony Crow**'s countrypolitan piano wending through the songs like a running commentary. Grown from Wagner's electronic HeCTA side project, *FLOTUS*' song structures open up ("JFK"), expand to epic length (the 18-minute "The Hustle"), sometimes just sound like Lambchop ("In Care of 8675309") and remain a constant surprise. Like all Lambchop, each feels more like an art object than a song, filled with intent and ideas and warmth, and carrying far more than itself. ***Jesse Jarnow***

The Dear Hunter
Act V: Hymns With the Devil in Confessional EQUAL VISION

If the title alone doesn't wise you up as to what's in store when you listen to a **Dear Hunter** record, then surely the celestial harps and swelling strings on opening prelude "Regress" let you know the stakes are not of this earth. As **Casey Crescenzo** sings, "Slave to the seeds you've sown, lost in the leaves," you wonder if he's singing about himself. A casual listener might do better to put the vague concepts and flowery language aside for a minute, though, because that's when the band's musicianship really shines. "Cascade" is a vintage groover with a steady, pop-laced chug. "Mr. Usher (On His Way to Town)" conjures a big-band swing vibe to tell the story of its titular character, including a sumptuously elegant piano run and horns that elevate Crescenzo's words to croons. But it's hard to focus on his lyrics and groove along to the song at the same time, which forces you to choose, and then inevitably miss something. Crescenzo has promised this to be the last "rock" album in the series, and with the Broadway-esque moments of exposition and the slick production, you believe him. Every generation seems to have a few bands like The Mars Volta or Coheed and Cambria—progressive composers concerned less with the immediacy of their work than with the metatextual meanings their listeners form once the references and mythologies have all been unpacked. Most of us won't start an HBO show mid-season without a recap, but for

The Nth Power

those willing to spend the time unpacking The Dear Hunter, *Act V* will be a vital and essential listen. ***Justin Joffe***

Two Door Cinema Club

Gameshow GLASSNOTE

It's been a few years since **Two Door Cinema Club** unveiled their last album, 2012's *Beacon*, but the cohesive evolution between that effort—as well as their 2013 EP, *Changing of the Seasons*—and this new one is almost seamless. *Gameshow*, recorded in LA with producer **Jacknife Lee**, opens with its first single, the buoyant "Are We Ready? (Wreck)," and, from there, reveals itself as an apt balance between pop hooks and edgy ambience. There is a sense of vintage throwback in the music, especially on the falsetto-laced number "Bad Decisions" and '80s-ish synth rocker "Fever." Frontman **Alex Trimble** has noted the inspirations of David Bowie and Prince on the tracks, and those influences show themselves heavily—so much so that it wouldn't be surprising if Nile Rodgers helmed this album. "Good Morning" finds a deeply compelling and dancey backing beat for Trimble's thoughtful lyricism, offering the sense that Two Door Cinema Club put a lot of care and effort into the craft of these songs. The layers are precise and well orchestrated, even as they extend into vibrant euphoria. While it doesn't necessarily sound like the band's previous material, it does feel like an extension of it, giving *Gameshow* a familiarity, even in its newness. It's that sense of association and intimacy that lends the album its strength: You've never heard it before, but you feel as though you already know it. ***Emily Zemler***

Young Magic

Still Life CARPARK

Brooklyn band **Young Magic**, consisting of Jakarta-born vocalist **Melati Malay** and Sydney-born songwriter/producer **Isaac Emmanuel**, are clearly interested in ambience. The duo's third album, *Still Life*, brings this fascination into crystalline focus as they build icy, atmospheric soundscapes that are sparsely wrought and extraordinarily delicate. The album, like the band's prior efforts, is layered with dreamy textures, all building into an ethereal sequence of 10 tracks that feel less like individual songs and more like pieces of a whole. "Held" exemplifies the musicians' interest in graceful, impressionistic moods, with its melody flowing and ebbing together. "Default Memory," which gives Malay more of a narrative take on the lyrics than some of the other tracks, is a crooning number that feels like a relation to Purity Ring or The xx. The songs on *Still Life* aren't ones you'll necessarily ever sing along to—or even know any of the words to—but they are tracks that create a mood and a feeling and a sense that you are being overwhelmed by sound. The album is sincerely beautiful all the way through, each note dulcet and fragile with nothing out of sync or harmony. It can occasionally fade to the background because of this but, even then, the mood lingers and remains present. ***Emily Zemler***

The Nth Power

Live to Be Free HARMONIZED

With individual resumes that include support work for Beyoncé, Kanye West, Jay Z, Chaka Khan, The Meters and Ivan Neville, **The Nth Power** offer a sound that incorporates jazz, R&B, funk, hip-hop and pop in ways that reflect both their spiritual and soulful sensibilities. Recorded in concert at the Knitting Factory in Brooklyn, *Live to Be Free* lives up to its billing, offering up an instrumental outpour and gospel-like fervor that successfully bends the aforementioned stylistic boundaries while giving way to combined creativity. The shimmering sounds of "Freedom," "More & More" and "Home" offer an unabashedly upward gaze, while "Truth" and "Right Now" find the group getting into a groove better suited for the dance floor. The quintet has a decidedly old-school feel, but their skill and dexterity ensure that the songs provide more than a momentary distraction. Indeed, while some offerings suggest a more sensual stance, others—the compelling "Take My Soul" in particular—bring a more forceful dynamic to the fore. Exuberant and effusive, *Live to Be Free* clearly achieves its objective. ***Lee Zimmerman***

Kate Bush

Surfer Blood

Snowdonia JOYFUL NOISE

"One of these days, we'll never be apart again," **John Paul Pitts** croons at the climax of "Six Flags in F or G," a nerd-rock barn burner built on spaghetti western guitar riffs and wah-wah soloing. Within this manic context—of both the song and the band itself—it's easy to miss the lyric's subtle poignancy. *Snowdonia*, **Surfer Blood**'s inventive fourth LP, is their first without original lightning-rod guitarist Thomas Fekete, who died from cancer in May 2016. The spectre of death looms throughout, but Pitts never wallows in morbidity. Instead, aided by new guitarist **Michael McCleary** and bassist **Lindsey Mills**, he exorcises his grief via sonic escapism. The album opens with a handful of churning, surfy anthems ("Matter of Time," "Frozen") that recall the thrust of 2010 breakout *Astro Coast*. But Pitts' ambitions gradually swell—from the distorted dissonance of "Taking Care of Eddy" to the title-track's zig-zagging, borderline-prog structure. His most crucial shift is enriching the band's vocal arrangements, with Mills offering layers of high harmony and call-and-response flourishes. The eight-track set closes with "Carrier Pigeon," a breezy dedication to Pitts' mother, who was recently diagnosed with cancer. Here, with his boyish voice surrounded by swooping guitar reverb and "doo-doo" harmonies, he's never sounded more at peace. Pain often breeds passion, which often fuels great art. *Snowdonia* is proof. ***Ryan Reed***

Kate Bush

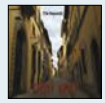
Before the Dawn CONCORD

For four decades, **Kate Bush** has expanded the technical boundaries of the recording studio—from the lush prog soundscapes of 1978's *The Kick Inside* to the cold Fairlight synthesizer tones of 1982's *The Dreaming*. But *Before the Dawn*, a live double-LP documenting her run of 2014 comeback shows, is surprisingly raw—a warts-and-all affair that highlights the muscle and naked angst of her music. The album, presented without a single post-production overdub, also feels a tad slight as a recreation of Bush's London residency, lacking the elaborate theatrical elements (puppetry, illusions, elaborate visuals) that made the live run such a distinct spectacle. Like the shows, her first since 1979, *Before the Dawn* is constructed in three acts: Both "A Sky of Honey" (the conceptual second side of 2005's *Aerial*) and "The Ninth Wave" (the B-side of 1985 landmark *The Hounds of Love*) are showcased in full, punctuated by stretches of tedious dialogue. (No doubt, *Before the Dawn* would have been better preserved on DVD.) But weed out the spoken filler and you're left with a powerful, no-frills journey through Bush's vastly underrated songbook. From the twitchy art-funk epic "King of the Mountain" to shimmering pop classic "Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God"), the singular majesty of her voice has only deepened with time. ***Ryan Reed***

OFF THE TRACKS

Tim Reynolds

That Way BEAM ON MUSIC



In an era where we can access nearly any instrument with the touch of a button, encountering a true acoustic-guitar album—especially one worth listening to all the way through—is a welcome rarity. *That Way*, the latest offering from guitarist **Tim Reynolds**, is certainly that album. In addition to his busy schedule with Dave Matthews in both full-band and duo formats, and his work in his own trio TR3, it's a wonder that Reynolds gets a moment to himself, let alone has time to craft a solo record of 14 new, original tracks. He doesn't hold back on this one, and after easing the listener into the mood with meditative opening track "A Tangled Web We Weave," the guitarist launches into the bluesy "Give Up the Goat," showing his ability to play melodies against basslines and add percussive flourishes at the same time. Elsewhere on the album, Reynolds picks his way around several different genres, whether it's the classical-guitar movement of songs like "Wish My Heart Would Make Up My Mind" and "Axiom of Maria" or the folky demeanor of tunes like "Healing Notion" and "Continue." All of *That Way*'s tracks are solo guitar, with the notable exception of closing selection, "Where Have the Years...," which employs sighing strings to accompany Reynold's steady waltz tempo and rapid, mandolin-like picking. And all of it comes together to build a beautiful, movie-score-ready finale to the album. ***Matt Inman***

Elephant Stone

Ship of Fools

BURGER RECORDS/FACTOR

There's a turgid undertow playing at the heart of **Elephant Stone**'s latest, an album they've tauntingly titled *Ship of Fools*. Much like the Montreal quartet's earlier efforts, it pays reverence to the psychedelic sounds of Pink Floyd, the church and other outfits that boast a brand imbued with prog and pretence. Indeed, there's ample emphasis on lysergic suggestion, especially as it's manifest in the darker designs that drive "Cast the First Stone" and "Au Gallis," in particular. That makes any return to terrestrial terrain—as accorded by the meditative musings of "Photograph" and "Run, Sister, Run"—all the more appealing. Likewise, with much of the instrumentation tossed about like some sort of cosmic concoction, more lucid melodies like "Where I'm Going," "Love Is Like a Spinning Wheel" and "See the Light" manage to meld a faint semblance of accessibility with the vast array of overblown anthems. Nevertheless, given the band's eerie, ethereal intent, it may be best to prepare by dusting off the strobe lights, firing up some incense and imagining what listening might be like as if it's an out of body experience—*Ship of Fools* finds Elephant Stone preparing its passenger to experience interstellar overdrive. ***Lee Zimmerman***

Plundering the Vaults

Various Artists
Afterschool Special: The 123s of Kid Soul NUMERO GROUP

The Jackson 5 seem like they might have been a one-of-a-kind anomaly. That combination of talent, ambition and parental encouragement is a rarity. But for every pop success on that scale, there are bound to be hundreds of artists striving to replicate the formula. That helps explain the variety of this collection of 19 youth acts ranging from Jackson 5 copycats, to spoken-word proto-rap kid covers of Gil Scott-Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" to all kinds of funk and soul-lite takes on puppy love. It's not all innocent pre-adolescent romance though. Some of these tracks—like the opener "I'm a Special Kid"—sound like the culmination of music-centered youth programs at community centers that are set to tape. One of the high points of the collection is a band called **Future Kind** who come in with a festive robotic sci-fi version of the participatory "Simon Says," a kind of no-wave space funk that is equal parts E.S.G. and Sun Ra. Other notable grooves take on issues of the day, like "I'm Free, No Dope for Me," an anti-drug ditty by the **Dynamics**, and "We Don't Dig No Busing," an anti-busing song by the **Greer Brothers**. The closing track—a strangely morose piano ode celebrating the life story of James Brown—is deliriously weird. But there's also solid Motown-worthy soul-pop, like **Scott Three**'s "Runnin' Wild (Ain't Gonna Help You None)." This is a record that is studded with peculiar oddities, tidbits that fans of untutored genius (think: the Shaggs) will appreciate. *John Adamian*

Emerson, Lake & Palmer
Emerson, Lake & Palmer
Tarkus
Pictures at an Exhibition
The Anthology BMG

Depending on your view, **Emerson, Lake & Palmer** might represent the apex of prog-rock's jaw-dropping technical wizardry—or the genre at its bloated, overblown extreme. Of course, both views are correct, a truth illuminated by BMG's latest deluxe reissue campaign. The first three sets—1970's *Emerson, Lake & Palmer*, 1971's *Tarkus* and 1972's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (not including a triple-disc *Anthology* compilation)—present the band at their showboating, mind-blowing best. The two-CD version of ELP features an essential 2012 remaster—highlighted by the demonic, jazzy "The Barbarian" and bluesy Hammond organ workout "Knife-Edge"—coupled with Steven Wilson's fascinating "Alternate Album" stereo mix, tricked out with rare instrumental "Rave Up" and a different version of **Carl Palmer**'s trademark drum solo. *Tarkus*, defined by the winding, 20-minute title epic, offers the same split approach: the previously issued 2012 remaster and extra-padded Wilson mix, though

DEAD RELICS BY JESSE JARNOW

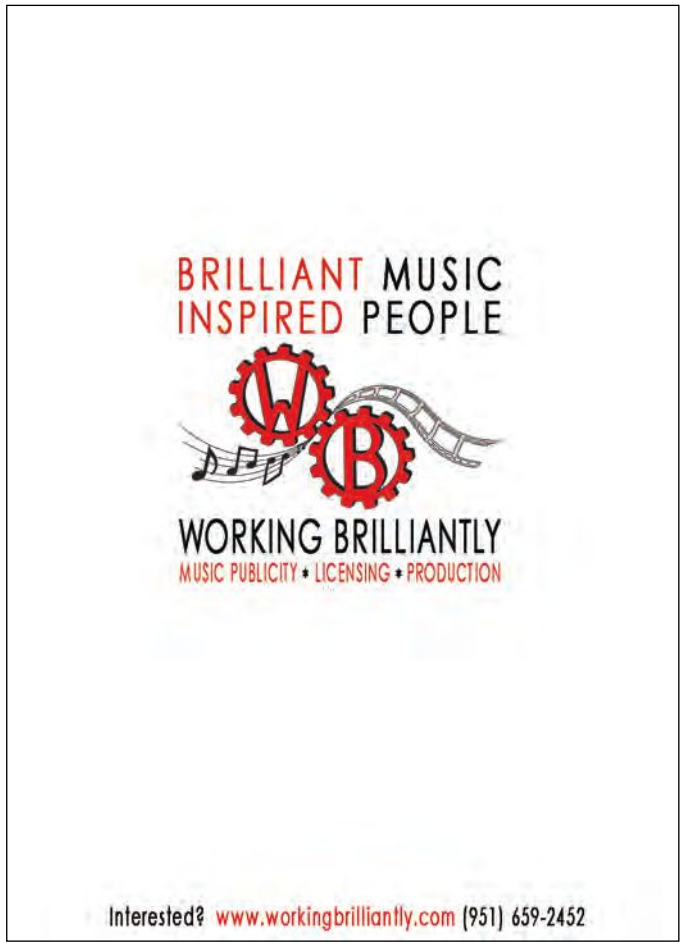
Grateful Dead
Dave's Picks, Volume 19: Honolulu Civic Auditorium, Honolulu, HI-1/23/70
GRATEFUL DEAD PRODUCTIONS/RHINO

Jerry Garcia Band
GarciaLive, Volume 7: November 8, 1976-Sophie's, Palo Alto

The arrival of archival releases from the **Grateful Dead** and **Jerry Garcia** solo projects has its own distinct flow, much like the Dead themselves. Not every set will seem like a gem to every listener. More, though, each provides an excuse for momentary time travel, a night out with Garcia, plus plenty of historical sites to hear and ponder along the way.

Dave's Picks, Volume 19 lands Dead freaks in Hawaii for a weekend in January 1970, the last shows with keyboardist **Tom Constanten**, and it's a slice of the Grateful Dead with everything in its right place. The two-night/three-disc stay tilts more toward country-boogie than psychedelia, but there's still a primo 18-minute "Dark Star" with a ghostly glockenspiel. There's, likewise, the question of who's singing with **Pigpen** early in the 46-minute "Turn on Your Love Light" (twice the length of "Dark Star"). Is it opening act Michael J. Brody, a long-haired oleomargerine heir intent on giving away his fortune? Probably not, but he's a good wormhole.

Retrieved from a stash of **Keith** and **Donna Jean Godchaux**'s personal tapes and previously unheard as a **Betty Cantor**-recorded soundboard, *GarciaLive, Volume 7* drops the listener on a Tuesday night in November 1976 at Sophie's, a few months before the venue transformed into the Keystone Palo Alto, a live music dive that soundtracked the birth of Silicon Valley. Though the date might actually be the following week, per an audience taper's notes, *GarciaLive* presents a random night from the Garcia Band's golden age. With Elvis Presley drum-god **Ron Tutt** hanging back, Jerry & Co. get lost in the slow-motion reggae-gospel of "Don't Let Go" and "Who Was John?" and elsewhere, headed for the wide, warm space between sleep and boogie. A postcard from Garcia's extra-Dead oasis, it's a space quiet enough for whispered musical conversations ("Friend of the Devil") and Donna Jean vocal leads ("Strange Man"). *Jesse Jarnow*

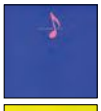


hardcore fans may still want to invest for **Chris Welch**'s insightful liner notes. The clear gem of the first round is the newly remastered Exhibition, rock's most bombastic live LP. The album, a thrilling rock adaptation of Mussorgsky's piano suite, finds the trio weaving tuneful original tracks (like **Greg Lake**'s acoustic ballad "The Sage") between the Russian composer's own themes (the regal "Promenade") and **Keith Emerson Moog** synthesizer assaults ("The Old Castle"). (The previously released *Live at the Lyceum Theatre* pads out disc two, though it's hard to imagine anyone preferring this muddled, noisy version.) These reissues don't offer any new revelations for completists—but for intrigued casual fans, there's no better gateway into prog's most divisive discography. ***Ryan Reed***

King Crimson

Beat
Three of a Perfect Pair

DISCIPLINE GLOBAL MOBILE



Robert Fripp unveiled a radically different **King Crimson** with 1981's *Discpline*, a torrent of interlocking guitars, New Wave choruses, and spastic rhythms. While the LP single-handedly reinvigorated progressive rock in the decade, its British-American quartet line-up—guitarist Fripp, guitarist-frontman **Adrian Belew**, bassist **Tony Levin**, drummer **Bill Buford**—never earned equal buzz for their underrated sequels, 1982's *Beat* and 1984's *Three of a Perfect Pair*. Both albums, the black sheep in Crimson's expansive catalog, are newly remixed by Fripp and prog golden boy **Steven Wilson** as part of DGM's ongoing 40th Anniversary Series, but only diehards will notice the subtle mixing tweaks—like the depth of Belew's doubled vocals on arena-groomed *Beat* ballad "Heartbeat." Still, don't let the archival reviews confuse you: Though these LPs lack *Discipline*'s surprise factor and track-by-track consistency, both added colorful twists to the '80s Crim oeuvre—*Beat* with its sleek Afro-funk grooves ("Waiting Man," "Sartori in Tangier"); *Perfect Pair* with its bouts of brutal, mechanized noise ("Dig Me," "No Warning"). The latest reissues offer an audiophile bounty for Crimson Kings: 5.1 surround mixes, alternate mixes, and lossless stereo tracks. More important, both enrich the story of this '80s lineup with rare and unheard tracks, from Levin's hilarious barbershop quartet goof "The King Crimson Barber Shop" on *Perfect Pair* ("Settle back to have some fun/ And tap your foot in 21") to the newly unearthed studio version of Beat's manic "Absent Lovers," highlighted by Bruford's sculpted hip-hop drumming. For newcomers, *Discipline* is still the gateway, but there's plenty left to explore once you pass through. ***Ryan Reed***

James Luther Dickinson

Dixie Fried

FUTURE DAYS/LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

It would take up most of this page to list all of the late **James Luther Dickinson**'s credits, so here are just a few. Under his full name, or more often as just Jim—as producer, pianist and singer—he led the Dixie Flyers, who became a Southern house band for Atlantic Records in the late '60s and early '70s. He played piano on the Stones' "Wild Horses" and keys for Dylan. He produced Big Star and The Replacements and collaborated with Ry Cooder on a slew of the latter's recordings. At the recommendation of Duane Allman, he also recorded *Dixie Fried*. It was his first solo album, cut for Atlantic in 1972, now expanded by seven songs. It's one that you either know already by heart or will discover for the first time and wonder where it's been all of your life. While he's not the most engaging vocalist in the world, Dickinson sure as hell put everything he had into every track, whether that's a traditional rave-up like "Wine" or Merle Haggard's "Mama Tried" or Tim Hardin's "The Lady Came from Baltimore"—those last two slowed way down to weeper pace—or the gospel standard "If I Had My Way." Dylan's "John Brown" is prescient, Dickinson's presentation is a ringer for the way Dylan himself might handle the song today, while bluesman Furry Lewis' "Casey Jones (On the Road Again)" is taken loose and easy. Dickinson had plenty of help here, with the cast of contributors numbering a couple of dozen (most notably one **Dr. John**), but it's Dickinson's personality that shines through, from one diverse track to the next. It would be 30 years before he'd cut another solo record, but this was the keeper. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Otis Redding

Live at the Whisky A Go Go: The Complete Recordings STAX

Otis Redding had a great year in 1966. His September 1965 release, *Otis Blue*, landed critical acclaim behind hits such as "Shake," "Respect" and "I've Been Loving You Too Long," and as his star grew, so too did the concert venues. While his popularly with white audiences grew, as evidenced by his singles' successes on the pop charts, Redding had yet to truly crossover. His three-night Whisky a Go Go stand would change that. Best known as a venue featuring the likes of The Doors, The Byrds and other "hippie" acts, Redding was the first soul singer to grace the stage. Bob Dylan, The Band's Robbie Robertson, and The Doors' Robbie Krieger, among others, turned out for this soul sensation. Backed by a nine-piece band with a full horn section, each set was a power-packed knock-you-back musical eruption as Redding continually left everything on the stage. A testament to the soul singer's raw determination, power, grace and ability to absorb the moment, the songs blend into a singular performance—a fleeting journey of one man's heartfelt outpouring. It's easy to feel Redding's pain and anguish on gripping tracks like "Pain in My Heart," "These Arms of Mine," "Mr. Pitiful," "Just One More Day" and "Chained and Bound." Similarly, his righteous exuberance shines on "Shake," The Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," James Brown's "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," "Respect" and The Beatles' "A Hard Day's Night." As expected, there is significant overlap over the seven-set, 6-CD offering, and Redding semi-apologizes for this, explaining that he's "making an album" (originally released in 1968). Each set is individually stunning and, taken together, all seven are mind-blowing. ***Glenn BurnSilver***

Otis Redding

Jethro Tull

Stand Up: The Elevated Edition

PARLOPHONE

Jethro Tull began life as a conventional blues-rock band, but they blossomed into a multi-headed beast with their second LP, 1969's *Stand Up*. Under the eclectic direction of frontman/mastermind **Ian Anderson**—and with the addition of freewheeling guitarist **Martin Barre**, who replaced blues purist Mick Abrahams—they were free to indulge bold musical whims. Before "progressive rock" had fully bloomed, the quartet was grafting jazz (an adaptation of Bach's "Bourée," showcasing Anderson's harmonized flute runs), classical, Middle Eastern (the mandolin-led "Fat Man") and folk elements onto their heavy rock foundation. The album's new *Elevated Edition* pairs a punchy remix from modern prog pioneer **Steven Wilson** with a treasure chest of rare and unreleased bonus tracks. A roughly recorded *Top Gear* BBC radio session, while worth a casual listen, is hardly revelatory. (During an awkward version of "Nothing Is Easy," the band members sound like they're playing four different sounds simultaneously.) The concert set *Live at the Stockholm Konserthuset* is better, highlighted by **Clive Bunker**'s thunderous drum showcase "Dharma for One" and Barre's psychedelic soloing on "Martin's Tune." In fact, many of the reissue's most charming moments are non-musical, like Anderson's sarcastic Stockholm stage banter about failing equipment and a hilariously bitchy radio promo spot from 1969: "Jethro Tull's new album, *Stand Up*, sounds a little like Roland Kirk playing flute over Cream. But you'll probably want to have it anyway." Jethro Tull wouldn't hit their peak until the early '70s, expanding their prog credentials on albums like 1972's *Thick*

as a Brick. But as this *Elevated Edition* reminds us, *Stand Up* was the crucial fork in the road. ***Ryan Reed***

Herbie Hancock
Sunlight
Feets Don't Fail Me Now

CHERRY RED

By 1978, **Herbie Hancock** had spent more than a decade shaking jazz upside down by its ankles, just to see what sounds fell out. As a bandleader and sideman for Miles Davis, he'd explored modal, hard bop, free-form and Earth-shattering fusion, expanding the genre so far that it barely existed as a conventional label. But 1978 was a different time. That year, he dropped jaws and depressed many of his hardcore fans with *Sunlight*, which found the keyboardist dipping into soul and funk-pop–all the while crooning through a goofy vocoder. Submerged in the breezy groove of "I Thought It Was You," it's hard to recognize the man who helped birth *Bitches Brew*. But Cherry Red's new reissue–a double-LP set paired with the following year's *Feets Don't Fail Me Now*–offers a chance to revisit with fresh ears and lower expectations. While *Sunlight* never achieves the same nimble interplay as the *Headhunters* era, its brisk, uptempo cuts ("Come Running to Me," the title-track) have aged better than expected. And the entire LP is redeemed by the closing tandem of "No Means Yes," a cosmic Latin-funk instrumental," and "Good Question," a samba-big band epic featuring the mighty rhythm section of **Tony Williams** and **Jaco Pastorius**. Too bad the album is bogged down by *Feets*, a painfully generic descent into disco. ***Ryan Reed***

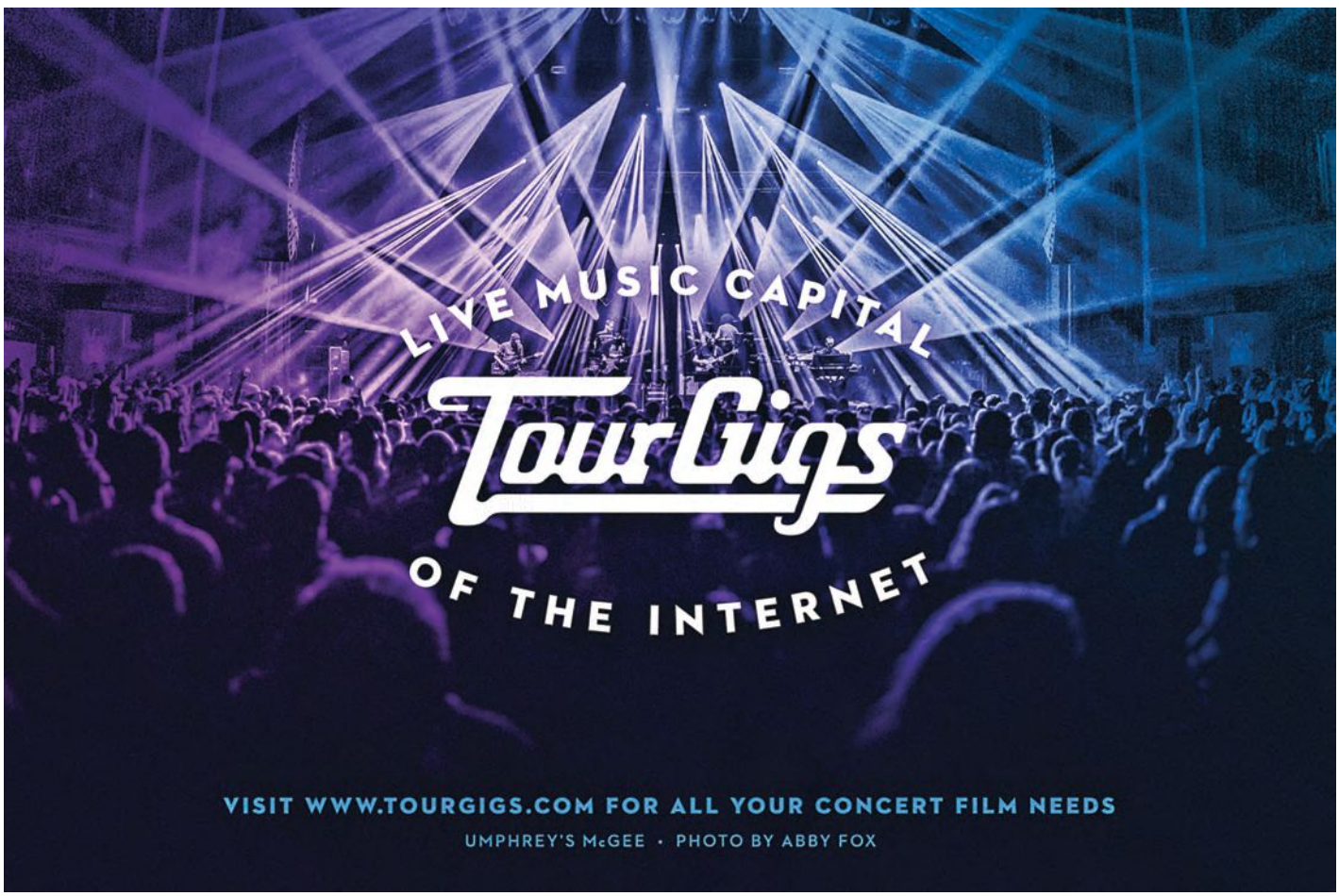
Bob Brown
The Wall I Built Myself
Willoughby's Lament

TOMPKINS SQUARE

If **Bob Brown**'s career seems like a footnote in folk history, then it wasn't through lack of resources. Two of his albums–currently reissued through Tompkins Square–originally appeared on **Richie Havens**' Stormy Forest label, rare for any artist other than Havens himself. It wasn't that Brown offered any specific spin on the norm–indeed, in 1970 and '71, when they were originally released, singer-songwriters occupied a crowded field–but simply having a nod from Havens, who also took the role of Brown's producer, ought to have brought these records more attention than they received. Brown's array of soft, sumptuous melodies, sung in an upper register while accompanied by chamber-like arrangements, should have gotten some notice all on their own. For those looking for benchmarks, he's best compared to early Tom Rapp and Pearls Before Swine in light of his precious touch. The earlier of the two discs, *The Wall I Built Myself*, makes for an impressive if belated introduction, its rich arrangements making songs such as "It Takes the World to Make a Feather Fall," "Quiet Waterfall" and "Seek the Sun" sound as delicate and deft as their titles suggest. Its follow-up, *Willoughby's Lament*, sticks to the same template but, if anything, it's even more elegiac than the first album. Certain songs–"Interlude," "Of Breath and Skin," "Baby Child" and "Death in Dreams"–reflect a sorrow that seems inherent in Brown's DNA. The arrangements are as rich as before, but mostly move at a more languid pace, a further result of that wistful reflection. In retrospect, it's a wonder these records escaped notice the first time around, offering hope that Brown's other three albums may also resurface soon.
Lee Zimmerman

Rush
2112–40th MERCURY

Rush became full-blown prog-rock gods in 1976 with their fourth album, *2112*–best remembered for its behemoth first side, a dystopian sci-fi concept suite about one man's discovery of an ancient, outlawed electric guitar. Four decades later, that 20-minute piece represents the genre at its dorkiest, with bassist **Geddy Lee** shrieking about the "priests of the Temples of Syrinx" in a glass-smashing range similar to a dog whistle's. This 40th anniversary edition, newly remastered at Abbey Road Studios, is the essential version–if only for its creative twist on the reissue format. The second disc includes a handful of eclectic cover versions by famous Rush fans, like power trio **Dave Grohl**, **Taylor Hawkins** and **Nick Raskulinecz**, adding tricky rhythmic shifts to the grand "Overture," and **Alice in Chains** amplifying the mellotron-laced melancholy on acoustic ballad "Tears." Best of all is Steven Wilson's reimagined take on "The Twilight Zone," full of jazzy Wurlitzer piano and stacked vocal harmonies. Meanwhile, the original *2112* remains a fascinating, flawed classic. And now's the perfect moment to reevaluate the album's underrated second side: "The Twilight Zone" and "Tears" both showcase Lee's powerful lower vocal register, and with bass beast "A Passage to Bangkok," the Canadian trio made tour bus weed-smoking sound like mythical subject matter. Rush perfected the concept LP in 1978 with the eerier, less on-the-nose *Hemispheres*. But for many prog diehards, *2112* is still their shining moment among the vast galactic stars.
Ryan Reed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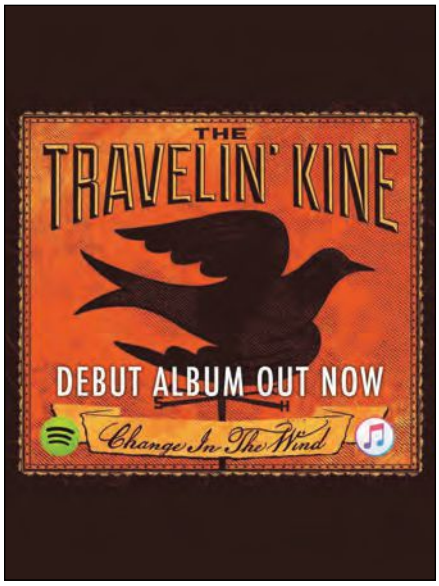
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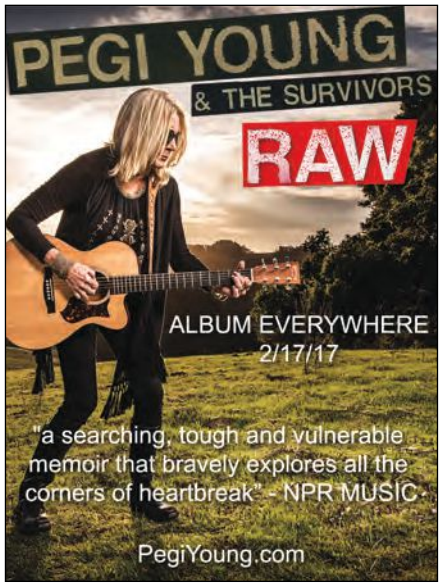
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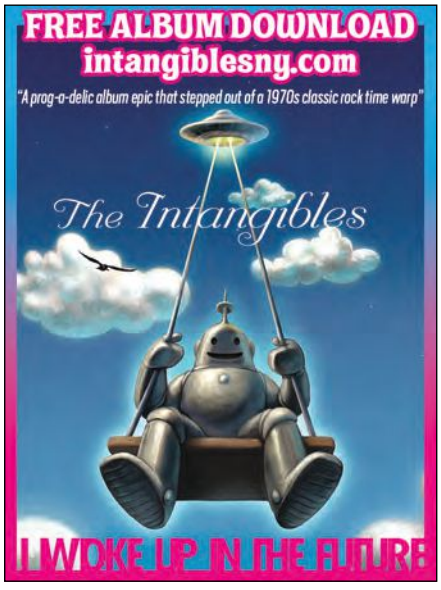
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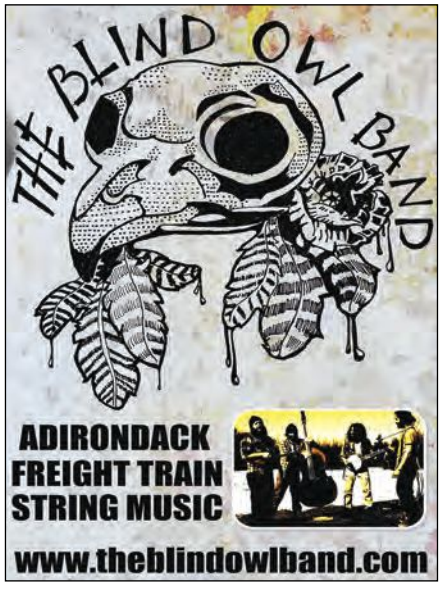
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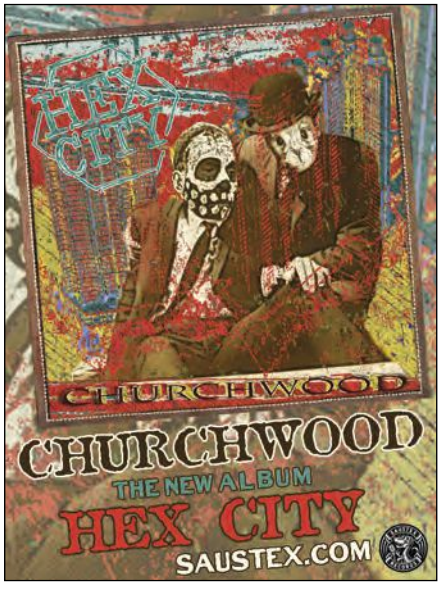
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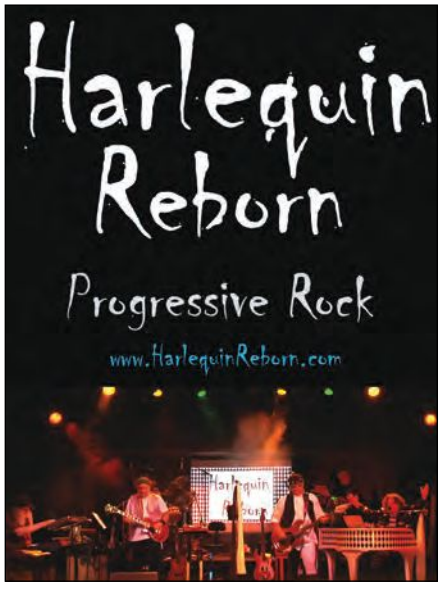

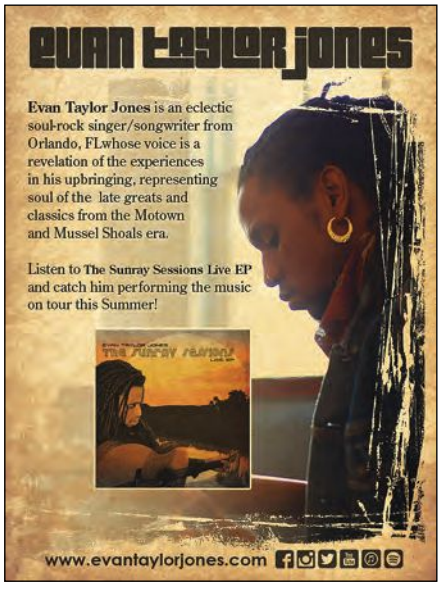
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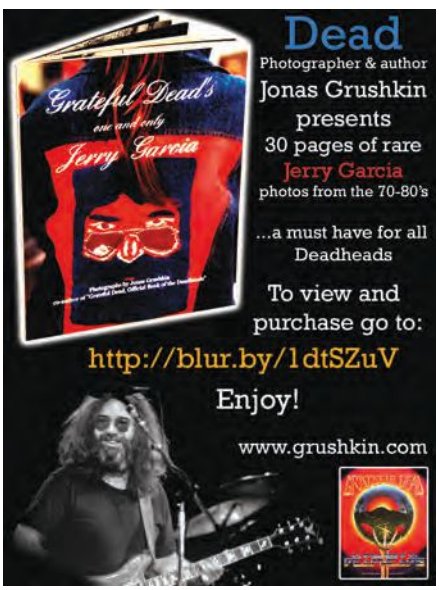

But true improvisation is just listening, really. It's not about you. It's about listening to what other people are doing and contributing to what they're doing."

We ri˜ on improvisation, and I make the comparison to the conversation itself, as neither of us knew quite where our afternoon at The Battery would lead us, topic-wise, and we just kind of bounced around based on what the other was saying. No agenda. The journey is the destination, and at least we're enjoying the ride.

"There's another element that people never talk about, which is what I call giving up the ghost," he says. "When you feel that surge, the group has its own mind and its own crazy insane cracked logic that it's moving with. That's why I love punk—because punk did that. It's coming from a very visceral place and it's not egotistical. The group funnels their energy into one person—it could be the bass player, it could be the drummer, it could be the fiddle player, singer, whatever. Sometimes, it's like a cannon and shoots energy into individuals like that. It's completely random and it's not planned. I love that. It's frightening."

Cass' manager tells me that he splits his time between the East and West Coasts and that, despite growing up in the Bay Area, he identifies as a New York artist. I respect that, but I'm not so sure I buy it entirely. A day or two after our wine talk, Cass starts shooting me a series of text messages. He's been actively pondering some of the topics we touched on. (Example: "I've been thinking about what I've learned from playing with Lesh and Weir, and I think it's going to take some time to understand what they actually taught me, ha ha.")

Pretty soon, the texts start to get heavy, as we toss the ball back and forth about whether or not artists have a social responsibility, whether or not activism actually accomplishes anything ("what one person calls cynicism another calls activism") and the notion of psychedelic consciousness.

"Music is a cell, it is of the body, so naturally it brings people together," he writes. "I know I talk a lot of trash, but all my friends are talented trash talkers and it's all in humor and love. My own music is how I get out my confusion. Some of these ideas are ephemeral and many people take issue with the word psychedelic, which I also understand. But perhaps it's in the place of a feeling that is indescribable."

Before I can respond, he sends two rapid fire texts: "I got to think about this a little more!" Followed by: "Point is, I don't know, just trying to figure it out like everyone else. Probably nothing to figure out."

I push him on activism, asking if it's vanity ("I know people who cannot vote because they've been convicted of a felony; they certainly don't think that activism is vanity" he shoots back) and/or the age-old debate as to whether or not artists have a duty to be sociopolitical weather vanes, mouthpieces, etc., versus just making really cool sounds that we can dance to and escape from all that noise for a bit. It's a two-sided coin.

But then he lets it drop that he witnessed a horrendous hit-and-run accident earlier that morning, and apologizes by saying he's "feeling very goth."

And that's when he reveals something about his upbringing that gives genuine context to Cass McCombs, the artist. After remarking that Judy Collins and Liam Clancy were helping him feel normal again, after witnessing such unexpected violence, he sends me the following: "Impossible to forget how heavily the Vietnam War a˜ ected all of our favorite music from the '60s." This leads into a back-and-forth about our mutual love and early discovery of the Woodstock film and soundtrack, to which he adds: "Also, growing up in the Bay, the '60s antiwar movement was still very potent. Still is actually. And we're still at war. Only di˜ erence is we are living in Vichy France now where very few will speak up." A minute of silence before my iPhone vibrates again. Another text: "Also, my grandmother knew the Black Panthers and blah blah blah."

It sounds like a potential future song lyrics, especially the "blah blah blah" bit. After all, *Mangy Love* kicks o˜ with a song called "Bum Bum Bum."

Perhaps the elusive meanings embedded throughout *Mangy Love*—and the wisdom wrought from them—can be found at the end of the video for "Medusa's Outhouse." The NSFW video is an incredible example of pairing a song's general meaning with a parallel storyline that's not a literal reenactment. In this case, a song that might be about the redemptive qualities of music, and its ability to o˜ er us an escape hatch from the everyday, is set to outtakes from a porn shoot and a staged, behind-the-scenes look at those who set out to find the American dream, only to discover the Hollywood nightmare. "I thought I was going to find something out about myself," says one of the porn stars, when asked what first brought her to LA. Did she find it? "I don't know," she says. "I think I turned out to be a di˜ erent thing."

After immersing myself in the dreamy sounds of *Mangy Love* for a few weeks, looking for my own answers, I think I know exactly what she means.

even ends with a tune named "Hang.")

Hunkering down at LA's Electro Vox Studios, Rado and France embraced their professional surroundings, working at a proper studio for the fir t time and utilizing a 40-plus piece orchestra on each of *Hang*'s tracks. Trey Pollard and Matthew E. White provided the arrangements and recruited many of the players from their pool of Richmond, Va., musicians. While the album's press materials don't take themselves too seriously and describe the album's stars as "two young guys [who] are lookin' good and bored and ready for some kinda seismic activity" and "the Big Bang of two combusting minds," it proudly boasts that they didn't use any computers while making *Hang*. It also notes that the album was recorded and mixed entirely on 2" tape and that the vinyl lacquers were cut directly from master tapes. The Flaming Lips' Steven Drozd, who also contributed to *...And Star Power,* lends a hand on a few songs, and members of The Lemon Twigs serve as the album's rhythm section. Lead single "America" is delicate enough to seem fully realized, but also subversive with its lyrics, while "Follow the Leader" and "So Tough" embrace their over the top nature. "We always get a live sound and try to incorporate it, in some way, into our more recent stuff," France says. "We just got into that tradition."

Rado says that he and France recorded a comprehensive demo version of *Hang* before bringing in their collaborators. "We map everything out pretty intensely," he explains. "I got really good at playing the guitar during the *21st Century* tour because I was doing it everyday. But, for *Star Power*, I was playing a lot of keyboards and, for the sake of the record, I lost a lot of ability to play music really well, so I had to relearn how to play a lot of instruments proficientl ." (He also mentions that they talked about working with Swift again, but he was ultimately too busy. However, the producer did recently record with Rado for another solo project and says they've discussed working on some other studio sessions.)

The members of Foxygen realized early on that they couldn't replicate *Hang*'s lush strings and brass on the road, so they put together another touring ensemble that uses a horn section to fil out their sound. At Rough Trade, France waited for Rado and the band to take their places onstage before making a grand entrance in a tank top and sunglasses. They showcased their new material, but also did a remarkable job of breathing new life into their catalog cuts.

"It's conceptual—we want it to be more like a Broadway show, where it is less about a band and more about the performance of the main person," Rado admits.

Both Rado and France have long since relocated back to Los Angeles largely because, as they say, space limitations make it hard for musicians to live in New York City unless they are DJs or, say, Sting. And despite whatever drama plagued the band during their post-blog-fame boom, these days, the duo seems genuinely healthy and invested in their musical partnership. Rado, in particular, has used his time off to fi -tune his production abilities and produced a Lemon Twigs album before releasing *Hang.* France appeared on the record but says that Foxygen remains his "main songwriting vehicle—Rado's too." Perhaps most important, they remain invested in sharing new music with each other.

"There's a lot of common ground and some split off to ," Rado says of the records they've each discovered recently.

"There's some stuff that I like, that maybe you aren't so crazy about."

"But that's what our friendship was always based on—showing each other things and interpreting those things," France responds. They both cite Ariel Pink, Sly & The Family Stone, Miles Davis, Roxy Music and Herbie Hancock's *Head Hunters* as recent obsessions, though they are still a ways off f om adding a jazz or funk album to their mythology.

"Star Power's dead—but maybe they'll come back," France says. "Star Power 2!"

"Star Power reunion tour!" Rado gets out between laughs. "Everything's very planned out for us. We work really hard on all the aspects of the record, and we'll always just be incredibly hard to work with—very specific requests on every aspect of the album."

Despite their grand vision, Rado is humble when looking back on Foxygen's actual benchmark moments and choice festival sets, noting, "I'm never playing a show and thinking, 'This is our Beatles at The Hollywood Bowl [moment]'—normally I'm just focusing on playing the right chords or something."

"It's still not a viable career path; I don't know why I'm still doing it," France jokes before offerin perhaps his deepest insight into his band. "It's not the '60s or '70s anymore, and we kinda have to deal with that."

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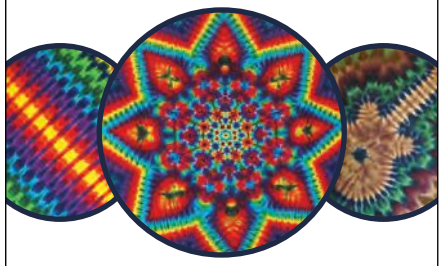
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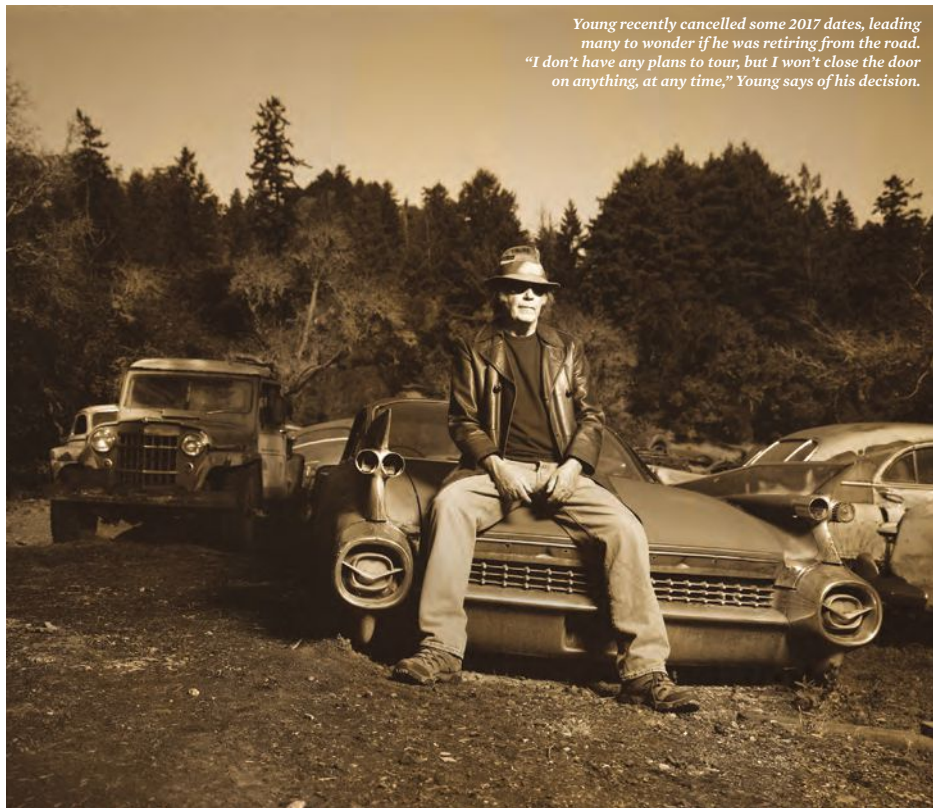

Young recently cancelled some 2017 dates, leading many to wonder if he was retiring from the road. "I don't have any plans to tour, but I won't close the door on anything, at any time," Young says of his decision.

"It's going to be a trip," he says, getting just as excited about this deep-dive into his history as he is about his new works. "You can go in and listen to it and read about it and see di˜ erent things—find out who played on it and do all that stu˜ . If you want to buy it, you can buy it on whatever level. If you want hi-res, low-res, vinyl, it'll be there."

Young goes on about the project, saying, "We've still never been able to find the technology to give people the sound that we want to give them, but we'll give them Blu-ray because it gets the quality of the sound onto the device that they usually have at their house. But Blu-rays are obsolete now. There's nothing other than hi-res music players and services, of which there are only a few including mine, and that doesn't involve hardware. So let's change the whole format into something we can use going forward, and we're well on our way to it because we're blending it with a website that's just going to be the archives. We're going to put up about 20 percent of the content [for now] and a lot of things are penciled in. There will be a place where you can go and see everything—a timeline—and open info cards. It's like an old antique file cabinet with file after file after file. Everything we've ever done will be in there."

The process of sorting through his catalog has allowed Young to experience his own material with a unique, removed perspective. "I'll be listening to old songs and I'll hear myself do something and I'll go, 'I remember this,'" he says. "And then it absorbs itself back into my playing because the more you change, the more you evolve, but you leave some things behind. It is worth picking certain things up when you hear them and taking them with you. It's just di˜ erent skills—di˜ erent languages to speak with the music. Sometimes you forget one, then you remember it. You can apply that much more than specific songs."

But don't expect Young to reconvene with his old bands anytime soon. Though he admits to having unfinished business with Bu˜ alo Springfield, a rep from Young's camp confirms that he is truly focused on playing with Promise of the Real, whose youthful energy and expert-level knowledge of his catalog inspire him and make him want to rock. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young are inching toward their 50th anniversary but David Crosby's recent comments about Young's divorce have made gossip headlines and Croz's strained relationship with Graham Nash, who also recently split with his wife, makes even a CSN tour feel far o˜ .

And as for Crazy Horse?

"Someday," Young says of his great backing trio. "When you look at Crazy Horse's past and you look at the frequency of our performances as a band and how they come and go, that's what kept us where we are—so we're right on course."

Danny Clinch

really not a good time to be a Jewish kid in Berlin, he fled, and the exhibition sort of goes from there, tracking his path across Europe and how he got to America, and then everything that he did here after.

What's been fascinating is how some people who knew Dad most of their lives learned a few new things—I've learned a lot of things myself just from doing the research behind what went into this show. I'd say the most moving experience I had while working on this was meeting a guy named Ralph Moratz, who sadly just passed away within the last year. He was a companion of my dad's when they were young boys, walking across Europe by foot escaping the Nazis, roughly between 1939 and 1941. They were both orphans and they both wound up in New York together and, eventually, lost touch. I had never met anyone who was with my dad at that stage in his life, not even close. I think the earliest first-person stories somebody told me were probably from the Catskill years. So Ralph is in the show and there are some video testimonials of him talking about their journey. That's probably my favorite part of this show.

I think a lot of people will go primarily for rock-and-roll—most people probably don't even know who Bill Graham is unless they are fans of rock history. But I keep hearing not only that the numbers are off the charts, but also that the demographic diversity is unlike anything people have ever seen. I think that's indicative of the fact that a lot of people are coming for one thing, but what is resonating with them is much broader than what they may have originally intended. For example, a lot of people come and they just want to see poster art, or they come for the photography, or because they just love The Doors, but then they end up being confronted with this story that covers the first 30 years of his life—even before he got into the rock-and-roll business, which is pretty intriguing, quite frankly. I think that it is such a profound thing for someone to go through what he did and then go on and basically create an entire industry.

DAVID: *Carlos [Santana] lent us a couple guitars, including one of his ornate ones from his festival period in the '70s. We're still pretty close with Carlos, and he was very nice and lent us something really pretty. I mean, that could be in a museum. That's another thing that's clear in the show—Dad had a very close relationship with everybody, and that comes through. There's a lot of love in the show, and I don't mean that flippantly.*

Speaking of that journey, one of the items in the exhibit is an early 1950s Bronx phone book. Can you talk about its significance?

ALEX: It's a fascinating part of his story and it's emblematic of the fact that you could not come up with a more self-made man in every sense of the word. He came here with nothing, he was 10 years old—he weighed 40 pounds, he had rickets. He had nothing but the shirt on his back and a prayer book and a yarmulke. He had no idea what happened to his family.

So, after spending nine weeks in an orphanage upstate, he was adopted by Alfred and Pearl Ehrenreich in the South Bronx. He grew up on Montgomery Ave. He barely spoke any English—actually, he did not speak any English. He spoke German and a bit of French, and he had a German accent because he was German. The kids in school used to kick his ass and call him a Nazi, and obviously the irony of that is off the charts. So he was desperate to assimilate into American life and culture, and forge a new identity for himself. He used to go to the movies all the time. Bob Greenfield told me that my dad used to go to John Garfield's movies and mimic his lines, and that's one of the things that helped him drop his accent.

ALEX: *When Reagan visited Bitburg, which was a cemetery in Germany where SS soldiers were buried [but the president did not visit any Nazi concentration camps], Dad was very upset. He staged a rally in San Francisco in Union Square, and he took out full-page ads in multiple newspapers across the country in protest. And then someone threw Molotov cocktails into his office an they basically burned it to the ground. They never found out who did it, but the timing and the connection doesn't seem too far-fetched. Many of the contents of the office, including a lot of the archival items—some of which are in the show—were fire damaged. The menorah was in his office and it partially survived. That was actually the most difficult thing, logistically, to transport.*

It's really intense. There's a plaque at the base of it that says "Survival" and my dad was seemingly indestructible. I never saw him afraid of anybody. I never saw him back down from anybody. I never saw him give up at anything. The more someone or something challenged him, the harder he would proceed in doing whatever needed to be done to get it done.

The menorah reflects his religious identity and how, culturally, he was a Jew, but it also demonstrates that theme of survival and reinventing himself, and the triumph he went on to create.

So, in furtherance of this forging of a new identity for himself, he took his birth name, Wolfgang Grajonica, which is WG, and he opened up a Bronx phone book and decided he was going to change his name to William Graham. And that's where Bill Graham comes from; he literally picked it out of a Bronx phone book.

Can you reflect on your father's legacy as a concert promoter?

DAVID GRAHAM: I think he followed the basic idea of "Treat people the way you would want to be treated." He took the attitude that the venue was his home and the fans were his guests. His famous analogy was to look at the show as the meal: He's presenting the main act and that's your meat, the opening act is your potatoes and you're inviting people in to eat this meal—and what my dad did was put the parsley on the plate. You don't need it, but that meal seems a lot better with that parsley on the plate. And that parsley is good sound, good lights and being treated with respect; it's the barrel of apples in the hallway at the Fillmore and being open to presenting all kinds of artistic expression. It's amazing shows like Miles Davis opening for the Grateful Dead and treating people with respect.

He was also very lucky at the time to stretch his wings as a promoter. Nowadays, when a band tours, they call the shots—there's no local promoter telling them what to do anywhere. It's a different era, and what's lost today in concerts is the personality—the connection between the local promoter and the fans was a big deal. The promoter knows how to treat his fans a certain way and *that* sort of art isn't around anymore; it's much more corporate, and that's too bad because what made concerts special is that special attention.

Maynard James Keenan

BY MIKE GREENHAUS

"I WANTED TO draw a map for my children so they would have a better understanding of my choices," Maynard James Keenan says of *A Perfect Union of Contrary Things*, the officia biography of his life written with longtime friend Sarah Jensen. "I approached Sarah because of her familiarity with some of the places where I made those choices and because I could trust her to get my journey right."

Far from a surface-level look at Keenan's time with his progressive-metal band Tool, the rock supergroup A Perfect Circle or his "multimedia cabaret troupe" Puscifer, *A Perfect Union of Contrary Things* focuses on Keenan's life outside the spotlight—from his early days in Ohio and Michigan to his stint in the Army and his close relationship with his mother. Jensen's third-person narrative weaves in direct quotes from Keenan and a variety of friends and associates, connecting the dots between the singer's not-so-divergent interests in songwriting, spirituality and winemaking. (He currently owns Caduceus Cellars in Jermone, Ariz.)

"New perspectives will always adjust your trajectory," Keenan says of his diverse projects. "Our job as a storyteller is to observe, interpret and report. New information means the story adjusts. Life is change in the face of chaos."

What led you to look back on your life story at this point in your career?

When you're closer to not being here than you are to having arrived, you take stock—where you were, where you're going—and that's important, especially for my children. A lot of things out there are misconceptions or not necessarily the full story. It was important to write it down and get it right. I could've gone through my agency and found a ghostwriter who would take his percentage and walk away anonymously. But I wasn't sure that they would be able to truly understand my work ethic and Midwestern mentality. Sarah understands that. She's my friend Kjiirt's older sister, and a writer.

Though *A Perfect Union* touches on Tool, A Perfect Circle and Puscifer, much of the book is dedicated to your early life and time away from the rock world. How conscious was that decision?

The long answer: Michael Jordan didn't just step onto the Chicago Bulls court never having played basketball before. Edgar Allan Poe had extensive life experiences before writing "The Tell-Tale Heart." Ronda Rousey spent thousands and thousands of hours training and competing before her fir t appearance in the Octagon. We are living in the "Age of Entitlement," and the dawning of the "Age of Idiocrasy." Few truly understand the work that goes into the path toward mastership. Although luck and timing are huge factors in one's success, without the solid foundation that took years or even decades to establish, that success is usually not sustainable. And that work toward mastership never ends. There are always ways to improve and build upon your chosen crafts. This was about going from before my birth and looking forward at a plan beyond the supposed ending of the book. Those pieces were all important. There was a lot we didn't include, of course. There are many parallel stories that could be pursued at another time. As the words were coming out of my mouth, we just said, "OK, let's follow this storyline."

While recounting your religious journey, you talk about finding a congregation that wasn't full of "idol worshipers." Has the desire to nurture a similar community of engaged fans played a role in your decision to pursue multiple musical projects simultaneously?

All my projects are about

expressing a relationship, a place, a moment, an idea. Everything we create stems from one or more of these starting points. Just in general, spirituality is a great thing. You have to balance it with your feet on the ground, and that's why agricultural endeavors ground you. You plant this thing and as it grows, you're witnessing magic. You have to get up in the morning and get rid of the weeds and make sure you're present and conscious with it. Along with the magic, there comes the response and that's important. There's your balance.

While describing your decision to open a vineyard, you admit that you were feeling unbalanced by only having Tool and A Perfect Circle as creative outlets. How did the wine world restore this balance and bring you into the "fourth dimension" you talk about?

Those who have wanderlust as their core will tell wide-eyed tales of inspirational, faraway places. As a vigneron, my goal is to tell that story in a glass. My favorite wines are those that speak clearly about a place and a time.

After World War I and II, we gave all our power away. We no longer grow our own food and are beholden to a larger company who promises that they're going to take care of us. Soup comes frozen in cans, and you send your kids off to a school that looks dangerously like a factory job, as far as the timing and breaks. You're basically being trained to rely on some benevolent higher power. It turns into your life. That's why we've seen a resurgence of the farm-to-table movement—chefs showing you how to grow these things yourself.

Once you've scratched the surface of planting something and watching it grow, it changes something in you. It's almost a freedom, a gateway. Unlike hops or carrots, it takes the vine a long time to nurture and coax that wine out of the ground. It's a commitment—that presence and consciousness. If others around you are paying attention, they will recognize that commitment and they can begin their parallel endeavors. You start to realize these dictators, presidents don't matter. We're helping each other.

You namecheck Joni Mitchell in *A Perfect Union of Contrary Things*. How did she inform your music?

Joni considers herself a painter fir t and foremost. She expresses in multiple mediums. That has been an inspiration. For me to call myself an artist can be perceived as a little pompous, but I can call her an artist. She's somebody who was dismissed for years—people just think of her as another fl wer-wearing hippie, but if you actually dive into the structure of what she did, you start to realize the breadth and depth of her creative force. Also being somebody, never mind a woman, who wrote their own material back then—Elvis barely wrote anything. She was not only a composer but also an engineer on a few of her records.

In your book, you talk about the universal patterns and designs of "sacred geometry." How has this concept influenced your work?

Sacred geometry is one of an infinite number of ays that we attempt to express or describe our reality. Whether it's winemaking, cooking, writing, martial arts and so on. It's a language I somewhat understand, and one of many I have attempted to implement into my art.

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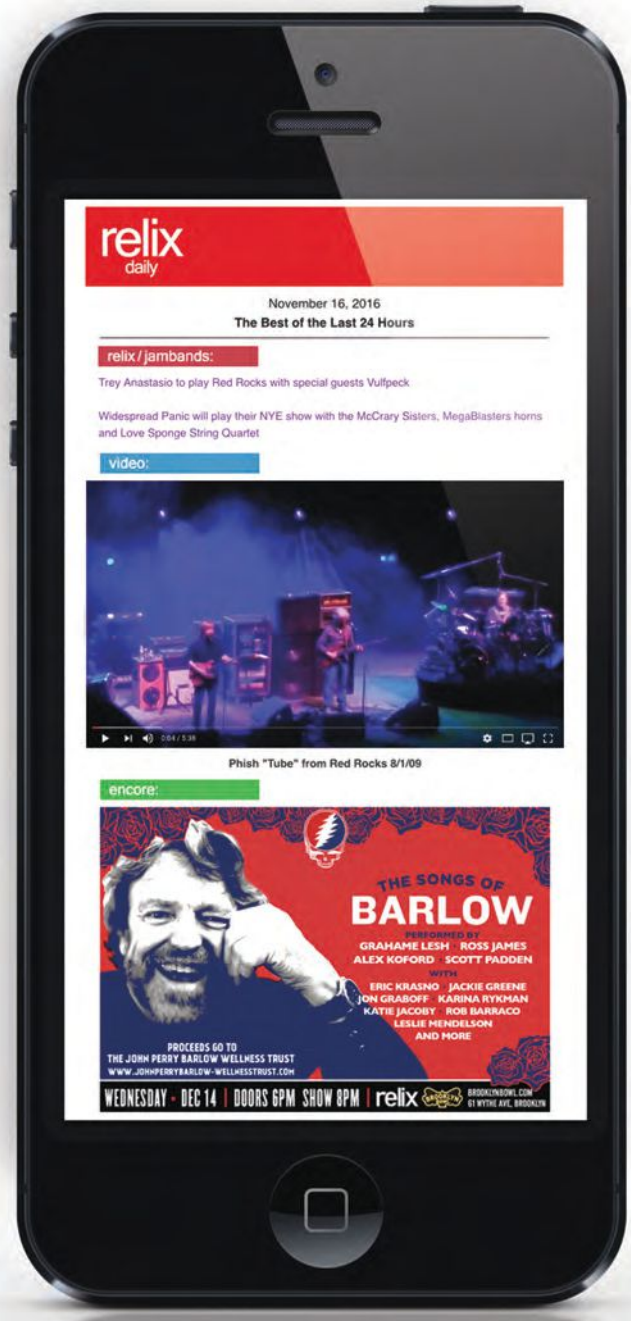
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